



RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

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RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Revised and enlarged edition of a book that has already made its mark, *Rural Sociology in India* deserves fresh laurels. In a book that is far from being voluminous, the author has ably achieved the difficult task of providing a theoretical framework from various authoritative sources and his own beautiful portrayal of Indian rural life. In the pages of this book, an Indian village is not a drab little place, as so often believed, but a place that is full of life and vitality, possessing a complexity all its own. It is not the pen of a litterateur that has dramatised the dull village but the patient, sensitive search of a discerning sociologist who unfolds the richness that lie wherever human beings live. Traditionally such richness has belonged to city life, in urban concentrations. It has needed the keener eye to see that though differing in quality, the richness of the rural life could be as absorbing and interesting as that of the more glamorous cities. It is just as well that an Indian sociologist has performed this splendid task. What would India be like if only its cities were interesting and its villages dull? We have to thank the author of this book Dr. A. L. Dholakia for the fact that it is not so.

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FOREWORD TO THE REVISED EDITION

Indian Society of Agricultural Economics has been popularising the study of agrarian life in India for last number of years. As a part of this programme, a series of publications have been brought out. "Introduction to Rural Sociology in India" by Dr. A. R. Desai was published in 1953 with the view to emphasising the need of evolving a sociological and a synthetic approach for studying the Rural Society. This work received warm response from academicians, research institutions and field workers. The book was out of print soon. There was a keen demand for it as some of the universities and Research Centres had prescribed it as a text-book.

During the intervening period considerable literature portraying the condition of rural India has been coming out as a number of institutions, government and private, as well as individual scholars and constructive workers are conducting valuable researches. The studies on the one hand, provide rich material portraying various facets of Indian Rural Life and on the other, indicate diverse research techniques used for the study of Rural Society. We, therefore, invited Dr. A. R. Desai to prepare a revised edition of his earlier work with the main object of making the fullest use of this new material.

The revised volume is thus a pioneering work which attempts to provide a synoptic multi-sided and rich picture of Indian rural society as it is emerging from the growing body of literature. It assembles important scientific studies from sources not easily accessible to the students and research workers in this country. Dr. Desai has devoted considerable time and energy in collecting the relevant Indian literature on the subject and I am sure it would serve the purpose for which this volume has been compiled. It should serve as a guide to the numerous students and workers in Rural Life.

Bombay,
January 1959.

MANILAL B. NANAVATI
President

PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA, though emerging from the earlier work 'Introduction to Rural Sociology in India' is a thoroughly revised, enlarged and so far as readings are concerned, a completely new work on the subject.

'Introduction to Rural Sociology in India' was published in the year 1953. It went off the market in 1955. It was essentially prepared as an approach to Rural Sociology in India. It was comprised of two parts; the first part serving as a general theoretical guide to the study of rural society in India, and the second part embodying numerous Readings. These readings expressed the views of eminent scholars (many of international repute) and organizations on the scope, method, utility and the lines of studies developed by the new discipline 'Rural Sociology.' These readings were incorporated with a view to helping the inauguration of such studies in India.

The scope and content of the present work have been substantially changed. It no longer merely emphasises the need for a scientific approach, but actually delineates the picture of rural society in India, emerging out of various studies of its numerous aspects that have been made. It is almost a new book. Even the Part of the book which remains almost intact acquires a new meaning in the context of the new. Part Two contains readings selected exclusively for providing a kaleidoscopic picture of the drama of rich and complex rural social life which is unfolding in the Indian countryside.

Though Part Two of the volume is composed of readings from various studies, it has a definite design. The ten sections enveloping the readings constitute a pattern. If perused carefully, they indicate the tendency of development of rural society in India. In the context of the theoretical formulations embodied in Part One and some special studies made by me, which have been embodied as readings in Part Two, the present work ceases to be merely an introduction of Rural Sociology in India. It can be rechristened as 'Rural Sociology in India.' It can also claim to be a source book of Rural Sociology about our country.

Rural society in India has acquired a new significance after Independence. It is now no longer considered as a mere raw material-producing hinterland. The Agrarian Sector provides the very morphological framework to the underdeveloped Indian society. The Government of the Indian Union is making a vigorous effort to transform the underdeveloped Indian society in conformity to the basic postulates

of progress embodied in the Constitution of the Indian Union and concretely formulated in the various Five Year Plans. Agrarian social structure which provides the very anatomy to the Indian society is attempted to be re-shaped with a greater thoroughness. From the inception of the First Five Year Plan, a huge endeavour is being made to overhaul the very productive base of the rural society as also its institutional and ideological superstructure. Serious efforts are being made to transform its ecological framework, the mode and motif of its economic production, the pattern of class relationships prevailing in it, the types of social institutions and associations composing it, the configurations of political power, and the very value systems underlying cultural life. Indian rural society is subjected to the pressures of actively operating agencies of social change. It has been hurled into the whirlpool of unprecedented change. However shapeless the rural social order may appear, after a decade of independence Indian society and its rural sector have been acquiring a design. This design requires to be comprehended.

It is heartening to note that a number of institutions, sponsored both by the Government and other agencies as well as a large number of academicians and reformers have started observing and analysing the transformation that is taking place in the structure, functions, power-relations, regulative systems and cultural norms within rural society. They have also begun to analyse the institutional, associational, and ideological changes that are taking place in rural society. Nay, eminent scholars belonging to different disciplines like sociology, anthropology, social psychology, archaeology, economics, politics, history and others have launched studies which throw fresh light on the Indian civilization, past and present. These studies which have been increasing in number are helping, on the one hand to rediscover the true characteristics of 'the classic Agrarian Civilization' of India and, on the other to evolve a picture of the rapidly changing present society. Unfortunately, most of the literature is in monographs and articles. A large body of it is not easily available. A considerable portion of it attempts to portray only segments of total reality. Some of it is photographically static in its narration. There are very few efforts to evaluate the total scene. The perspective of the total forest, however dim or sketchy in outline it may be, to evolve out of the innumerable intimate and valuable studies of trees that are made, has become absolutely urgent. It is the author's feeling that such an outline is now possible even on the basis of the available literature.

The present work attempts to contribute to the comprehension of the new design of social living that is emerging in rural society. My findings and opinions are embodied in Part I of the book and the four studies which are incorporated in Part II of this work.

Part II of the Volume is divided into ten sections, each comprising a number of readings.

Section I—'*Introductory*':—Contains two articles by the author. It attempts to provide a statistical background of the Indian Society and points out the major problems which are emerging as a result of the transformation that is taking place in Indian Society as a consequence of the operating of the philosophy of mixed economy.

Section II—'*Historical*':—Containing five readings, attempts to focus attention on the geographical, historical and sociological background of the classic agrarian social order of India.

Section III—'*Indian Village Community, Its History and Types*':—Comprising eight readings attempts to draw attention to this basic unit of Indian society from various angles.

Section IV—'*Agrarian Stratification*':—Consisting of six readings endeavours to portray the new class configuration that is emerging in the agrarian society. It also tries to point out the relative positions, respective strength, role and problems of the social classes composing agrarian social structure. It further attempts to indicate the relationship of these classes with the caste and tribal stratification in the agrarian world.

Section V—'*Rural India, Glimpses of Social and Cultural Life*':—Comprising thirteen readings, try to elaborate the kaleidoscopic picture of the rich, variegated and complex life that is lived in the vast rural continent as snapped by eminent scholars in their first-hand studies.

Section VI—'*Agrarian Unrest in India*':—Comprising four readings, gives an account of the types of struggles and conflicts that are rending agrarian social life.

Section VII—'*Obstacles in Rural Reorganisation*':—Comprising four readings, focuses attention on major hurdles which impede the reorganisation of rural society.

Section VIII—'*Rural Reconstruction—Patterns*':—Constituting four readings, essays to delineate all major efforts aiming at rural reconstruction. The most comprehensive effort, 'The Community Development Projects,' has been subjected to a closer and more critical examination.

Section IX—'*Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement*':—Comprising five readings, attempts to portray the movement and to evaluate the

postulates of the philosophy behind this movement which has gripped the imagination even of the Western thinkers.

Section X—'*Rural Society in Transition—Major Trends*':—Covering eight readings, attempts to depict trends that are developing in the agrarian society as a cumulative result of the interaction of all the forces that are operating to bring about change within it. It further tries to focus attention on the problems which are emerging as a result of the new configuration of class and caste relationships culminating into a new pattern of power structure. The concentration of economic, political, social and cultural power in the hands of certain castes, classes, and social groups in the rural areas, and its repercussions within the total rural life as depicted in these readings deserves most thoughtful attention.

The present work is prepared with a view to subserve the following purposes:

- (1) It attempts to focus the attention on the need of a sociological perspective in studying rural life ;
- (2) It attempts to outline the approach to study the rural society ;
- (3) It attempts to make accessible in one volume, the significant among the numerous studies that have been made regarding rural society. These studies reveal the various viewpoints and the diverse methods and techniques that have been adopted to study the different domains of rural society. It thereby draws attention to the growing body of literature germane to rural society.
- (4) It further attempts to portray the picture of the multi-sided and complex rural life as it is emerging in India and as is mirrored in the growing literature.
- (5) It also tries to locate the major trends that are at work in the rural society which according to the author are becoming increasingly discernible on the basis of various studies.

If I have even partially succeeded in achieving these purposes, I will feel amply rewarded for the labour. I am aware that the Selections could be improved. However, a number of factors restricted the scope of selections. The copyright difficulty, the problem of cost, the problem of availability of literature and further the problem of space regulated my choice. The selections are indicative and do not claim to be exhaustive.

Such work cannot be prepared without the co-operation of many friends, too numerous to be individually thanked.

First and most, I must express my sense of gratitude to Sir Manilal B. Nanavati, President of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics for goading me to undertake the work and for providing me with facilities to finish it. I am also grateful to Dr. M. B. Desai—the active Secretary of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics—for extending all types of co-operation in preparing this work. I must also thank the cordial staff of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics for extending me their co-operation and especially Shri B. David for seeing the publication through the Press.

I also express my thanks to the staff of the Library of Bombay University as well as that of Departmental Libraries for their willing and prompt co-operation in supplying with the necessary literature.

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To the authors and the institutions from whose writings and reports I have selected the readings I am doubly grateful. They have enlarged my vision about the Rural Society in India. They have also very graciously granted me the permission to publish selections from their valuable studies in the present work.

I express my sincere thanks to Mr. Moghe—Superintendent of the University of Bombay Press and his staff for bringing out this work in its present elegant form amidst numerous other obligations.

I hope the present study will help to create a climate for richer and more synthetic studies of Indian Rural Social life.

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- (16) Dr. V. B. Damle,
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FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION

The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics has been popularising the study of agricultural economics in India for the last twelve years. As a part of this work, a series of publications entitled "Readings in Agricultural Economics" was projected in 1949, with a view to assembling significant scientific literature from sources not easily accessible to students and research workers in this country. 'Introduction to Rural Sociology in India' is the 4th publication in this Series.

After attaining Independence, India is trying to establish a democratic society with accent on social justice and equality. For the last three years, powerful forces have been released which are changing, albeit slowly, the old pattern of life in every sphere, economic, social and cultural. Strenuous efforts are being made to increase production in agriculture through River Valley and Community Development Projects and Extension Services. Agrarian reforms for which legislation has been passed or contemplated are bound to have far-reaching effects on rural social structure. Measures for improvement of health and education of the nation are included under the comprehensive Five Year Plan of Economic Development.

But India is a vast country with a variety of cultural and social norms, ranging from those of the head-hunting Nagas to the cosmopolitan cities under Western influence. At a time when we are consciously attempting to change the social pattern, it is desirable that facts in every region are studied in all their aspects, so that while respecting the uniqueness of each we may be able to chalk out a uniform line of action for building a better social milieu. This is indeed a tremendous task under the present state of a rigid social stratification and illiteracy, which offer considerable resistance to change and innovations. At this stage, we thought that a study of Rural Sociology in India would be very helpful as it would give a correct perspective of the various forces operating in the society.

The approach to rural development through community projects, schemes based on the T.V.A. experience, "*Sarvodaya*," multipurpose co-operatives, etc., indicates an awareness of the need for a wider comprehension of the problems at the social and economic level. The object of the schemes under community development is to awaken the social consciousness of the rural community and mobilise their energies for agricultural reconstruction. This can be achieved only through a clear grasp of the social relationships which exist and react against

each other among the rural community in all their aspects, individual and institutional.

Like Rural Economics, Rural Sociology is also a new science ; some of the aspects in rural community life may have been studied in anthropology, economics, history of the caste systems and religious philosophy. Each of these aspects has no doubt its own importance but an integrated study of the whole rural social system would be of great value.

It was with this object that the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics invited Dr. A. R. Desai, Lecturer in Sociology, School of Economics and Sociology, University of Bombay, to prepare this volume. The study is not concerned with any selected or specified region or territory but tries to lay down a general pattern for the study of sociology in Rural India supplemented by a selection of extracts on the subject from eminent authors.

We do hope that this preliminary study will stimulate further interest in the subject as a whole, and of regions or even of groups of villages. Such studies would be very helpful in the execution of the programmes under the National Plan.

Bombay,
8th April 1953.

MANILAL B. NANAVATI
President.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

“Introduction to Rural Sociology in India” is written with a view to focusing the attention of scholars, administrators, political and social workers and others, on a hitherto neglected subject in India.

It attempts to emphasise the importance of studying systematically a domain of social reality which has been either totally ignored or has commanded insufficient attention.

Indian society is overwhelmingly rural. However, as yet, a systematic, synthetic and interconnected account of the rural social organization and its developmental tendencies, has not been presented. In the initial chapter of this book, I have tried to bring out why there is an urgent need for the study of Rural Sociology in India.

Sociology is still a Cinderella among Social Sciences ; it has not found its proper place even in the academic world. Rural Sociology, as such, is not even considered worthy of attention. This is unfortunate in a country, where a society which is overwhelmingly agrarian is undergoing a profound transformation.

The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics which has been trying to popularise studies in Rural Economics asked me to prepare this volume. I thought a pioneering effort of this nature, with all its limitations, may stimulate greater interest in this subject and may provoke more fruitful and scientific studies. I accepted the offer and the present work is its result.

The volume is composed of two parts. The first part draws attention to some of the basic aspects of the problem. The second part comprises selections from various works dealing with the subject by eminent scholars and associations, national and international.

In the first part, I have attempted to explain in a synthetic manner the scope of Rural Sociology in India. In it, I have tried to indicate how different aspects of rural life are organically interconnected and should be studied in their mutual interactions. The family, the caste, the economic institutions and the political organizations ; also the religious, the educational, the aesthetic and other social phenomena of rural life have to be studied in their interactions and in a proper perspective. It also tries to bring out how in India a total picture of rural social drama requires a synthetic approach. In short, it strives to emphasise how a sociological approach to rural life in India is vital for the understanding of its past, present and future trends.

In the process of preparing this book, I had the benefit of going through the valuable works of outstanding scholars on the subject. In the study of the subject, one cannot escape making a grateful reference to authorities like Sorokin, Zimmerman, Galpin, Sims, Landis, Sanderson, Smith, Herskovits, Kolb, Brunner, Taylor and others. The second part is therefore, composed of selected extracts from the writings and reports of eminent writers and associations. The selections are not comprehensive but only indicative. The scope of the selection was restricted due to a number of factors. Limitations of space, copyright difficulties, as well as the problem of making it as representative as possible, had to be kept in mind before choosing the excerpts.

The selections, however, have been made with a view to pointing out how the science of Rural Sociology is emerging, how various aspects of rural life are being studied sociologically, and how methods of research and trends of investigations are developing elsewhere. The main purpose of these Readings is to stress the theoretical significance and practical importance of Rural Sociology.

I trust the volume will serve as a useful introduction to the complex and vast problem which deserves immediate attention.

Had it not been for the encouraging guidance from Sir Manilal B. Nanavati, this work would not have seen the light of the day. I am also indebted to Prof. M. L. Dantwala for having gone through the manuscript and making useful suggestions. To numerous friends and to the helpful staff of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics I express my thanks for their co-operation and suggestions.

I must also thank all the publishers, authors and Research Organizations for so readily permitting me to utilise excerpts from their published work.

8-4-1953.
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PART I

INTRODUCTION TO RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

CHAPTER I

STUDY OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

RURAL INDIA, NOT INERT

A systematic study of the rural social organization, of its structure, function and evolution, has not only become necessary but also urgent after the advent of Independence. The very process of achieving national freedom and transfer of power from the British to the Indians as also the colossal and very significant consequences which have followed this achievement, have revealed the signal importance of a careful, all-comprehensive, and methodical study of the rural society in our country.

The extensive participation of the rural masses in the long drawn out national liberation struggle as also the devastating communal frenzy which swept over the rural social world and resulted in the uprooting of a great section of the village population in a number of provinces, the deep ferment which is, at present, seething in the agrarian area and which frequently bursts out in varied forms of struggles between different strata of the people, the numerous prejudices which are corroding the life of the rural people and which manifest themselves in various caste, linguistic, provincial and other forms of tension, antagonism and conflict—all these phenomena reveal that rural India is not so inert and quiescent as it was once assumed to be.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW STATE

The grave problems pertaining to rural society outlined above have been brought to the forefront in the post-independence period. The Constitution of the independent India has already fixed the goal towards which Indian society is to develop. A secular state, based on universal franchise and with the welfare of its citizens as its prime objective as provided for in the directive principles of the Constitution, is the national ideal which has emerged after the transfer of power. The realization of such an ideal, however, is a most complex and stupendous task which a people can set to itself.

To evolve a truly secular state in a country which is a citadel of the most stubborn religious prejudices rampant among its people ; to create a social and cultural atmosphere for the intelligent exercise of universal adult franchise by the citizens who are living within the traditional, authoritarian, joint family, caste and semi-feudal social framework and the overwhelming majority of whom are illiterate ;

to develop a welfare economy in a country where the entire productive system is increasingly deteriorating; to implement such directive principles of the Constitution which accept the need to provide such rights as the right to work, the right to social security, the right to education and others to citizens when even the task of providing primary necessities to them is increasingly becoming more and more difficult;—to fulfil such a programme, it is vitally necessary to have a precise and thorough understanding of the Indian social structure and its developmental tendencies.

PREDOMINANTLY AGRARIAN BACKWARD

Those who desire to strive for such a creative social transformation have to bear in mind that India is overwhelmingly an agrarian country; that not less than three-fourths of her population is engaged in agriculture; and that the agricultural economy, which forms the material basis of the life of this vast mass of the population, determines their social organization (the institutional matrix within which their life processes flow) as well as moulds their psychological and ideological life. Further, since the rural society forms the major sector of the Indian society, the specific programme of the re-casting of the former must, it must be borne in mind, inevitably play a decisive rôle in any scheme of transformation of the latter on a higher economic and cultural basis.

URBAN BIAS OF SCHOLARS

Statisticians, economists, sociologists, social workers and government agencies have, hitherto, overwhelmingly focussed their attention on the study of the phenomena and problems of the urban society, though by far the greater portion of the Indian humanity lives in the rural area amidst conditions of immense material and cultural poverty. Even the literature dealing with the factual data about the life of the rural people is very meagre. It is true that there has grown a literature, though insufficient, devoted to the study of different kinds of soil, manure, seeds, techniques of agriculture, land holdings, land tenures, processes of marketing of crops and other matters pertaining to agrarian economy. There are even some fragmentary studies delineating the life history of some castes and tribes and indicative studies of some villages. However, upto now, neither have the problems of the rural society been formulated in all their bewildering complexity and variety, nor have a scientific diagnosis and solution of these problems been offered.

The study of the Indian rural society, which varies from state to state, from even district to district, due to their extreme geographical, economic, historical, ethnic and other peculiarities, hitherto made has been spasmodic, insufficient and often superficial. Such a study

cannot give an authentic, composite picture of the variegated landscape of the rural life, nor can it serve as a guide for evolving a scientific programme of reconstruction of the rural society, so essential for the renovation of the entire Indian society.

In fact, a concrete and comprehensive study of the rural society in all its aspects, ecological, morphological, institutional and cultural, has hardly begun.

STUDY OF RURAL SOCIETY, REASONS

It is, however, urgently necessary to make a scientific and systematic study of the rural society, of its economic foundation and social and cultural superstructure, of its institutions and their functions, of the problems arising from the rapid process of disintegration which is undergoing and which even threatens its breakdown.

(1) India is a classic land of agriculture. Its long past history, its complex social organization and religious life, its varied cultural pattern, can hence be understood only if a proper study is made of the rise, growth, crystallization and subsequent fossilisation and break up of the self-sufficient village community, the principal pivot of the Indian society only till recently.

(2) Due to historical reasons, the existing Indian rural society has become a veritable mosaic of various types of rural societies and hence reveals a diversified cultural pattern. The culture of the hunting and food gathering tribes; the culture of the primitive hoe-agriculturists; further, all the varied cultures of peoples engaged in agrarian production with the plough and the bullock, as also the modern culture of a rural people influenced by new technical and economic forces—all these cultures are juxtaposed in the contemporary rural India. Further, the Indian rural humanity is also being influenced by the ideological currents of the modern era. Consequently we find, in the Indian rural world today, the persistence of primitive cults of magic and animism, polytheism, pantheism and of the ancient world, monotheism and other idealistic philosophic world outlooks inherited from the ancient medieval periods as also a minor current of modern rationalist world view. This has transformed it into a veritable museum of different and even conflicting cults and ideologies.

(3) ✓ The unique agrarian socio-economic structure of India experienced a decisive transformation as a result of the impact of the British conquest and rule. On the eve of the British conquest of India, the Indian rural society was composed of a multitude of villages. Each village lived almost an independent, atomistic, self-sufficient social and economic existence. The village represented a closed so-

ciety based on economic autarchy and social life governed by caste and community rules.

In the economic sphere, the village experienced a steady transformation during the British period. Its economic self-sufficiency was dissolved. It slowly began to produce for the Indian and the foreign market and, not, as before, for meeting the needs of the village population. The village economy became increasingly an integral part of the national and even world economy. The influx of cheap foreign and, subsequently, of indigenous industrial goods into the village, progressively undermined the village artisan industries. The old self-sufficient economy based on an equilibrium between the village agriculture and the village artisan industry was thus disrupted.

In the social field, the rule of custom enforced by the joint family, the caste and the village panchayat, was gradually replaced by the reign of laws made by the centralized British state in India and administered by its own revenue, executive and judicial officials posted in the village. This considerably undermined the powers of the joint family, the caste and the village panchayat.)

The introduction of the modern means of transport and communication accelerated the processes mentioned above.

Every aspect of the village life, social, economic, political and cultural, experienced a steady transformation. The old pattern of village life, the old structure of village society, became appreciably changed.

Since the transformation was mainly brought about by a foreign power to serve its own political and economic interests, it resulted in the destruction of the old type of the rural society without its being replaced by a socially healthy, economically progressive and culturally more advanced new type. The transformation culminated in the emergence of the present impoverished and culturally backward village which, moreover, lacked stability and a definite structural design.

The Indian agrarian economy is at present in a state of acute crisis. This has resulted in the unbearable economic misery of the rural people. The agrarian situation has consequently become almost explosive.

It is, therefore, vitally necessary to focus attention on the crisis of the rural economy. The solution of the crisis is the essential precondition not only for eliminating poverty of the rural population but also for building a prosperous national economy which can guarantee a higher material standard of life to all citizens.

It should be noted that the role of social institutions in accelerating or retarding the fulfilment of an advanced programme of agrarian reconstruction is greater in India than in any other country. Programmes and policies of rural renovation based on pure economic factors have not, therefore, met with appreciable success. The role of such institutions as the caste and the joint family organization in thwarting such programmes and policies has not been hitherto properly grasped. The necessity of *Rural Sociology* becomes all the more important in India.

RURAL SOCIOLOGY, ITS URGENT NEED

To reconstruct such a rural society on a higher basis, it is urgently necessary to study not only the economic forces, but also the social, the ideological and other forces operating in that society. It is a complex and colossal task.

As referred to above, only stray, spasmodic efforts have been hitherto made to study the life processes of the Indian rural society. No systematic study has still been launched to study that society in all its aspects, to study its life processes in their movement and, further, in their inter-connections.

In fact, Indian rural sociology or the science of the laws governing the specific Indian rural social organism has still to be created. Such a science is, however, the basic premise for the renovation of the Indian rural society, so indispensable for the renovation of the Indian society as a whole.

CHAPTER II

RURAL SOCIOLOGY, ITS ORIGIN AND SCOPE

A. ITS ORIGIN

Rural sociology or the science of the laws of development of rural society in general has come into being only in recent times.

EARLY REFLECTIONS

Reflections on rural society, indeed, are as old as the rural society itself. In the past, social thinkers had made attempts to comprehend the life processes of the rural world and to advance solutions of the problems arising therefrom. A comprehensive survey of the views of eminent thinkers belonging to various countries in the past epochs regarding rural life and its problems as they emerged in the changing rural society in various stages of development has been made in the "Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology" Vol. I, edited by Sorokin, Zimmerman and Galpin. It reveals how some of the basic features of rural society and urgent problems of changing rural life had commanded the interest and attention of earnest social thinkers of ancient, medieval and early modern periods and impelled them to make sociological reflections, though they would betray to the well-equipped modern rural sociologists a lack of scientific methodology.

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATIONS FROM SIXTH CENTURY

It was since about the middle of the nineteenth century that more systematic observations on the history of the origin and transformation of rural society have been advanced. The impact of the capitalist industrial civilization upon the rural economy and social structure, in various parts of the world, forced the attention of scholars to the study of the trends of rural social development. Research in the subject of the origin and the nature of village communities which were undergoing transformation was launched.

Olufsen, Maurer, Maine, Hexthausen, Gierke, Elton, Stemann, Innes, Coulanges, Nasse, Laveleye, Baden Powell, Ashley, Pollock, Maitland, Lewinski, Seeborn, Gomme, Guiraud, Jubainville, Slater, Vinogradoff, Meitson and others are some of the outstanding scholars who have thrown light on rural society from various angles.

Subsequently eminent scholars, professors and others interested in the phenomena of the rural life have published in various countries enormous material dealing with its various aspects.

AS AN ORGANIZED DISCIPLINE IN THE U.S.A

However, rural sociology as an organized discipline consciously developed, is of very recent origin. Due to historical reasons it has originated in the U.S.A. and slowly tends to draw attention elsewhere as its importance is being realized. During what is called "Exploiter Period" of American society (1890-1920), a period when the American rural society witnessed all round decay, a considerable literature, describing and analysing the problems arising out of its growing crisis, came into existence. This literature, however, did not explore, locate, and formulate the fundamental laws governing the development of rural society. It created the prerequisites for the birth of the science of rural society but did not still create that science. However, the beginnings of rural sociology may be traced to those "streams" of publications.

The first valuable work on the subject was the Report on the Countrylife Commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907. A number of Doctorate theses based on the study of the rural community comprised further significant literature dealing with problems of rural life and providing revealing information thereon. Finally a group of rural church and school studies made by individuals interested in an investigation of maladjustments in rural life constituted the third "stream" of publications. This literature served as the basis for creating the science of rural sociology in the U.S.A.

The Countrylife Commission, under the chairmanship of Dean Bailey, the eminent scholar of rural problems, circulated 500,000 questionnaires to farmers and leaders of rural life and received nearly 100,000 replies. The Commission, on the basis of this investigation, published a report in which they attempt to analyse and diagnose the defects and deformities of rural society. "This report actually provided what might be called a charter for Rural Sociology."

"An American Town," "Quaker Hill" and "A Hoosier Village," of which James Michel Williams, Warren H. Wilson and Newell L. Sims were respectively authors, represented further studies of the American rural community. These studies were based on statistical and historical data and field-interview techniques and were submitted as research documents at the Columbia University between 1906 and 1912. Dr. Warren Wilson, along with others interested in the processes of rural life, carried on a number of rural church studies. These studies, together with some rural school studies and "The Social Anatomy of an Agricultural Community" by Dr. C. J. Galpin based on an investigation into rural life made by him at the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Wisconsin in 1915, comprised additional literature germane to rural sociology until 1916.

"Rural Sociology" by Prof. John M. Gillette published in 1916 served as the first college text book on the subject. Subsequently, a number of writers devoted themselves to the study of rural life and published valuable works which also enriched the literature on the subject. The publication of "A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology" in 1930 recognised as an "Epoch-making" work contributed decisively to accelerate the advance of rural sociology.

Later on, other intellectuals also focussed their attention on the subject and helped its further development.

Sorokin, Zimmerman, Galpin, Taylor, Kolb, Brunner, Sims, Dwight Sanderson, Landis, Redfield and Smith are some of the outstanding social thinkers in the U.S.A. whose intellectual labour resulted in a phenomenal advance of the new science of rural sociology.

The founding of the journal "Rural Sociology" in 1935 (at present a monthly) and the establishment of "Rural Sociological Society of America" in 1937 were further landmarks in the history of its growth.

In the U.S.A., rural sociology, though a new science and still in a state of immaturity, is commanding wider and wider interest among social thinkers to-day. More than eight hundred professors and research workers are engaged in developing that science in that country.

ITS PRESENT STATE

In other countries also, increasing attention is being paid to study and systematise this branch of study.

The various studies organized by the League of Nations and embodied in a number of monographs, together with the recent studies made by such organizations as UNESCO, FAO and others, have also contributed to the rapid advance of rural sociology.

Such is the history of the genesis and growth of rural sociology, the youngest amongst all sciences. It has started taking roots and is slowly but securely spreading itself in various parts of the world including India which needs it the most in view of its very large rural population with innumerable complex problems.

B. ITS SCOPE

As in the case of every young science, especially of a young social science, a great controversy has taken place over the question of the definition and scope of rural sociology among scholars engaged in the endeavour to develop it.

CONTROVERSIES

Is rural sociology a distinct science or is it merely an application of the general principles of sociology (or the science of society as a whole) to the sphere of rural social phenomena? Should rural sociology restrict its scope merely to the life processes of rural society or should it also include, as an integral part, a study of rural and urban social life, comparative as well as in their mutual inter-connection and interaction and, further, have as its central concept what Zimmerman describes as "The mechanism and effects of urbanization and ruralization upon a population"?

Further, should rural sociology only provide scientific knowledge about rural society and laws governing its development or should it also serve as a guide and suggest practical programmes of reform or reconstruction of that society in the economic, social or cultural fields? In short, should rural sociology merely give an objective authentic composite picture of the changing rural life in all its multifold and multiform aspects or also function as an ideological instrument to remould it according to a social purpose and a practical plan?

These are some of the principal problems over which extensive controversy is at present raging among sociologists. Such a disagreement among social scientists is not a characteristic peculiar to the field of rural sociology. Even regarding sociology in general, neither a clear, universally accepted definition nor a unanimous view of the scope of its study have as yet emerged among sociologists. The sub-domains of the single concretely whole domain of social life are so intermingled, interacting and even overlapping, that it is difficult to isolate one of them, study it and evolve a distinct science disclosing the laws of its structure and its evolution. Hence it is that disputes take place among social thinkers regarding the method and approach to be adopted to evolve a social science.

BASIC AGREEMENT

In spite of a wide divergence of views among rural sociologists regarding the definition, scope, and objective of rural sociology and also about the emphasis to be laid on this or that factor of the rural society as the point of departure for its study, there also exists a number of basic agreements among them.

✓ All rural sociologists recognize that the social life of the community is divided into two distinct segments, rural and urban. Though these segments interact among themselves, each is sufficiently distinct from the other.

All of them hold the view that social life in rural setting exhibits characteristics and tendencies which are peculiar to it, which constitute its specificness and which, therefore, sharply distinguish it from social life in urban setting.

All of them unanimously declare that the prime objective of rural sociology should be to make a scientific, systematic and comprehensive study of the rural social organization, of its structure, functions and objective tendencies of development, and, on the basis of such a study, to discover the law of its development. Since every science, social or natural, has for its aim the discovery of the hitherto hidden law of development of a domain of nature or society, the basic task of rural sociology, they unanimously declare, is to discover the law of development of rural society.

CHAPTER III

RURAL-URBAN DIFFERENCES

After briefly referring to the origin and the scope of rural sociology, we will endeavour to locate and study the distinctive features of the two types of social phenomena, rural and urban.

NEED TO DISTINGUISH RURAL-URBAN SETTINGS

Social life in the countryside moves and develops in a rural setting just as social life in the urban area moves and develops in an urban setting. Their respective settings considerably determine rural and urban social life.

A correct comprehension of the specific characteristics of the rural framework is, therefore, indispensable for a proper grasp of the distinct features of rural social life. Such a study constitutes the first task of the rural sociologist and can be accomplished by studying in contrast the distinctive features of rural and urban settings. A brief outline of the principal points of contrast between the rural and urban settings will show how the different structures and life-processes of rural and urban societies are to a great extent the consequence of the difference between those different settings.

SIGNIFICANT CRITERIA TO DISTINGUISH THEM

Outstanding sociologists have laid down a number of significant criteria for distinguishing the rural social world from the urban social world, such as the social composition of population, "the cultural heritage," the magnitude of material wealth, social stratification of the population, the degree of the complexity of social structure and social life, the intensity and variety of social contact and others. They have finally attempted to trace the sharp differences and contrasts between the two types of social phenomena, rural and urban, largely to the basic differences between the rural and urban settings.

The following are the most important criteria for distinguishing the rural social world from the urban social world:

- (1) Occupational differences.
- (2) Environmental differences.
- (3) Differences in the sizes of the communities.
- (4) Differences in the density of the population.

- (5) Differences in the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the population.
- (6) Differences in the social mobility.
- (7) Differences in the direction of migration.
- (8) Differences in the social differentiation and stratification.
- (9) Differences in the system of social interaction.

The following table reproduced from "Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology"¹ reveals the decisive differences between the rural and the urban worlds:

	Rural World	Urban World
Occupation	Totality of cultivators and their families. In the community are usually a few representatives of several non-agricultural pursuits.	Totality of people engaged principally in manufacturing, mechanical pursuits, trade, commerce, professions, governing, and other non-agricultural occupations.
Environment	Predominance of nature over anthropo-social environment. Direct relationship to nature.	Greater isolation from nature. Predominance of man-made environment over natural. Poorer air. Stone and iron.
Size of community	Open farms or small communities, "agriculturalism" and size of community are negatively correlated.	As a rule in the same country and at the same period, the size of urban community is much larger than the rural community. In other words, urbanity and size of community are positively correlated.
Density of population	In the same country and at the same period the density is lower than in urban community. Generally density and rurality are negatively correlated.	Greater than in rural communities. Urbanity and density are positively correlated.

¹ P. A. Sorokin and C. C. Zimmerman : "Principles of Rural Urban Sociology," pp. 56-57.

	Rural World	Urban World
Heterogeneity and homogeneity of the population	Compared with urban populations, rural communities are more homogeneous in racial and psychological traits. (Negative correlation with heterogeneity).	More heterogeneous than rural communities (in the same country and at the same time). Urbanity and heterogeneity are positively correlated.
Social differentiation and stratification	Rural differentiation and stratification less than urban.	Differentiation and stratification show positive correlation with urbanity.
Mobility	Territorial, occupational and other forms of social mobility of the population are comparatively less intensive. Normally the migration current carries more individuals from the country to the city.	More intensive. Urbanity and mobility are positively correlated. Only in the periods of social catastrophe is the migration from the city to the country greater than from the country to the city.
System of interaction	Less numerous contacts per man. Narrower area of the interaction system of its members and the whole aggregate. More prominent part is occupied by primary contacts. Predominance of personal and relatively durable relations. Comparative simplicity and sincerity of relations. "Man is interacted as a human person."	More numerous contacts. Wider area of interaction system per man and per aggregate. Predominance of secondary contacts. Predominance of impersonal casual and short-lived relations. Greater complexity, manifoldedness, superficiality and standardized formality of relations. Man is interacted as a "number" and "address."

CHAPTER IV

VILLAGE, ITS HISTORY

VILLAGE, A HISTORICAL CATEGORY

After having surveyed the chief characteristic differences between the rural and urban segments of social life, we will now proceed to analyse the structural pattern of the rural society since it provides the matrix within which the whole drama of rural life is unfolded.

✓ The village is the unit of the rural society. It is the theatre wherein the quantum of rural life unfolds itself and functions.

Like every social phenomenon the village is an historical category. The emergence of the village at a certain stage in the evolution of the life of man, its further growth and development in subsequent periods of human history, the varied structural changes it experienced during thousands of years of its existence, the rapid and basic transformation it has undergone during the last hundred and fifty years since the Industrial Revolution—all these constitute a very fascinating and challenging study.)

PLOUGH AGRICULTURE, ITS SIGNIFICANCE

✓ The rise of the village is bound up with the rise of agricultural economy in history. The emergence of the village signified that man had passed from the nomadic mode of collective life to the settled one. This was basically due to the improvement of tools of production which made agriculture and hence settled life on a fixed territorial zone possible and necessary.)

How humanity, in different parts of the world, passed from the nomadic hunting and food gathering stage to that based on roving hoe agriculture and, thereafter, on settled plough agriculture carried on by means of draft animals, has been one of the most difficult and complex problems in the field of social research.

With the invention of the plough, man could develop stable agriculture, the basic source of assured food supply. Man's nomadic mode of life ceased. No longer men roamed in herds from place to place in search of means of subsistence. They settled on a definite territory and organized villages based on agricultural economy. Agrarian communities with villages as their fixed habitation and agriculture as their main occupation came into existence. This event marked a

landmark in the history of mankind, inaugurating a higher phase of social existence. Agriculture assured the community, for the first time, a relatively stable food supply in contrast to previous stages of social life. While food supply derived from such sources as hunting, fishing, fruit gathering and migratory hoe agriculture had always been insufficient and precarious, grain and other types of food products derived from plough agriculture could be counted upon and also be stored for use in periods of emergencies, thereby assuring relative food security for the future.

In the agricultural phase the struggle for existence became relatively less acute for man. Further, at a certain stage of the development of agricultural economy, due to the greater productivity of agriculture, a section of the community could be liberated from the necessity of participating in food production and could therefore concentrate on secondary industrial or ideological activity. This gave momentum to the growth of technology, arts, sciences and philosophy. It also brought about, though slowly, the significant transition in the social organization of humanity, from an organization founded on kinship and clan to that based on territorial ties. With the development of agriculture at a certain level, mankind took a leap from totemistic collectivist clan society to territorial civil society with its distinct multi-class social structure and the resultant institution of the state.

✓ Civilization thus began with the development of agriculture. The village—the first settled form of collective human habitation and the product of the growth of agricultural economy—thus historically gave birth to rural society, and from the surplus of its food resources, nourished the town which subsequently came into existence.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF VILLAGE AGGREGATES

✓ In the history of different peoples living in different parts of the world, different types of villages emerged with the rise and spread of agriculture. This was mainly due to differences in geographical environments in which those peoples lived. Further, the early village of a people also underwent changes in time due to its subsequent technical, economic, and social evolution as well as due to the impact of other societies on it.

The history of the village, in time and space, reveals such diverse village types as the Saxon village, the German Mark, the Russian Mir, the self-sufficient India Gram, the village of the feudal Europe which was an integral part of the manor; and finally the modern village, which is an integral part of national and world economic systems, with its variants such as the U.S.A. village, the typical West European

village, the village of the backward modern countries of Asia, the village of the Soviet Union based on collectivized agricultural economy and others.

Hence the student of rural society should study the village, the basic unit of rural society as it originated and underwent a constant state of development and change due to the action of its own developing internal forces as also due to its interaction with other societies.

✓CRITERIA TO CLASSIFY VILLAGE AGGREGATES

Eminent sociologists have advanced a number of criteria to classify village communities.

(1) According to one criterion the village aggregates have been classified according to the types which evolved during the period of the transition from man's nomadic existence to settled village life. Thus villages have been divided into three groups: (i) the Migratory agricultural villages where the people live in fixed abodes only for a few months; (ii) the Semi-permanent agricultural villages where the population resides for a few years and then migrates due to the exhaustion of the soil; and (iii) the Permanent agricultural villages where the settled human aggregates live for generations and even centuries.¹

(2) According to the second criterion villages have been classified into grouped (or nucleated) villages and dispersed villages. In grouped villages the farmers dwell in the village proper in a cluster. They work on the fields which lie outside the village site. Since they dwell together in a single habitat, they develop a compact life. In the case of the non-nucleated dispersed village type, the farmers live separately on their respective farms. Their habitats being thus dispersed, their social life assumes a different form.²

(3) Village aggregates have been also classified according to a third criterion, that of social differentiation, stratification, mobility and land ownership.³

According to this criterion, village aggregates have been grouped into six broad types viz. (1) that composed of peasant joint owners; (2) that composed of peasant joint tenants; (3) that composed of farmers who are mostly individual owners, but also include some tenants and labourers; (4) that composed of individual farmer

¹ "Encyclopaedia of Social Science" Vol. 15, "Village Community" by Harold J. Peake. p. 254.

² Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology, Vol. I, p. 263

³ *Ibid*, p. 560..

tenants ; (5) that composed of employees of a great private landowner ; and finally (6) that composed of labourers and employees of the state, the church, the city or the public landowner.

NEED FOR SYSTEMATIC CLASSIFICATION IN INDIA

A systematic classification of Indian village aggregates on the basis of the above criteria and a study of their history will provide valuable information about village communities in India, about varied types of social institutions which have come into being in rural India, and also on the complex cultural patterns which have influenced and been influencing the life processes of the Indian rural people.

An exhaustive survey of Indian villages co-relating the village types classified according to three principles will help to disclose the laws of the rise and development of Indian village communities. It will also help historians and sociologists to locate the laws of the peculiar development of Indian society and, further, will assist rural workers to evolve scientific programmes of rural reconstruction.)

CHAPTER V

REGIONAL APPROACH TO RURAL SOCIETY

SIGNIFICANCE OF REGIONAL APPROACH

One of the important aspects from which rural social life is increasingly being analysed is the aspect of its spatial organization.

What factors determine the growth of varied types of villages, what factors operate to combine a cluster of villages into an agrarian region, what factors tend to transform an agrarian region into a cultural, linguistic or political region, and how do regions evolve into a province—these problems are of considerable significance in the study of rural society.

FACTORS GENERATING REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Sociologists have attempted to locate the factors explaining this process. According to them, some of the important factors, which have determined the structural pattern of the village, the formation of regional and other bigger units and the interrelations of the village with those units, are as follows:

(1) Natural conditions like relief, configurations, soil, water resources and others ; (2) the stage of agrarian economy, whether it is the nomadic stage, the stage of fixed subsistence agriculture or that of commercial agriculture ; and (3) the nature of social conditions such as needs of defence, forms of property and others.

. GROUPED AND DISPERSED HABITATS

The first great division which has been made of village communities from the ecological angle is that of nucleated or grouped villages and dispersed habitats. This distinction is vital from the point of view of the study of the entire social life of the rural community. The members of a rural community who dwell in villages have generally stronger social urges, exhibit a stronger feeling of social cohesion, and possess greater ability for co-operation than those who are dispersed and live on their respective farms. Each type of habitat furnishes a different framework for social life. The nucleated village is marked by "proximity, contact, community of ideas and sentiments" while in dispersed habitats "everything bespeaks separation, everything marks the fact of dwelling apart."

STUDY OF LARGER RURAL REGIONS, DIFFICULTIES

The study of the emergence of a larger rural area is one of the most baffling problems confronting the student of rural society. The factors which have combined to evolve homogeneous rural regions demand a very careful examination. Again we find that the larger rural regions change their characteristics with the change in the techno-economic, socio-economic and socio-political forces. The epoch of self-sufficiency evolved one category of regions. Under the impact of Industrial Revolution and production for market, a totally new type of rural areas came into being. The change from market economy to planned economy, where the agrarian sector is consciously developed as a part of the total life of the community, is creating in some countries and will create in other countries a new type of regional units. And, above all, the gigantic development of productive forces which is evolving an international economic and cultural community in the modern epoch is forcing the students of human society and especially of rural society to discover the appropriate variety of rural regions which will be in consonance with this development.

Efforts are being made to define economic, linguistic, administrative, religious and cultural regions in various countries. Efforts are also being made to find out where these regions coincide and also to study the laws which bring about this concurrence.

The works of Sanderson, Kolb, Taylor and others which embody an intensive study of rural economic and cultural zones in the U.S.A. have thrown considerable light on the phenomenon of the development of such zones. Various studies of primitive tribes—their geographical milieu, technical equipment, economic organization, social institutional structure, religion, arts and culture and, further, their transformation under the impact of communities belonging to various stages of civilized life—also furnish rich material for discovering the laws of rural development. Works dealing with the rôle of geographical factors—such as mountain, river, desert, sea, rainfall, various species of trees and animals—in indirectly or directly influencing the nature of economic organization, social institutions, styles of architecture, and beliefs and other ideological elements of man's life, also provide valuable clues for a correct understanding of the emergence of varied rural cultures.

The environmental and regional approach will help to distinguish chief village types and village social structures. It will also assist in scientifically classifying principal regional, district and provincial units. It will also aid in locating the underlying factors which have operated to create distinct culture-areas. And finally it will help

to evolve a systematic account of the evolution of Indian society as a whole.

ECOLOGICAL MAP OF INDIA, AN URGENT NEED

A detailed map of India indicating various natural and economic regions ; indicating the areas inhabited by populations living in various stages of economic development ; showing linguistic regions including regions based on different dialects as well as different variations of the main language ; and showing, further, religious regions based on different religious beliefs prevailing among the people ; will throw great light on some of the most burning problems of Indian society and will also assist those engaged in the difficult task of reforming rural society to locate some of the fundamental causes of the present crisis of that society.

CHAPTER VI

RURAL PEOPLE

The first task confronting the rural sociologist is to define the rural people and distinguish them from the urban population. Various approaches have been suggested for that purpose by eminent thinkers. Classification adopted by Government Census Departments in various countries is, however, generally accepted as the most convenient, though it may vary from one country to another.

RATIO OF RURAL-URBAN POPULATION

The next task before the student of the rural people is to determine the ratio of rural and urban populations. In many countries, this ratio in a great measure indicates the level of living of the people as a whole since it shows the relative proportion of industry, and agriculture and hence the total wealth of the people. The ratio further considerably influences the apportionment of social amenities within the country. It thereby serves as a guide for evolving a correct programme for social advance. One of the great mistakes committed by a number of reformers and social engineers is to transplant mechanically the techniques adopted for reform in a country inhabited by a small agrarian population and with a vast area of land to a country inhabited by an overwhelmingly agrarian population and with scarce land resources. The recent effort to introduce measures adopted to improve the agrarian sector of the U.S.A. which is overwhelmingly industrial to predominantly agrarian backward countries of Asia is an instance of such an error. Even within the same country a detailed study of the ratios of rural-urban population in different regions is essential because these differences considerably alter the nature of problems relating to those regions. For instance, the problems of Gujarat and those of Bihar are different as there is a difference in the proportion of rural-urban population of these states.

√ DENSITY OF RURAL PEOPLE

The next important problem is that of the density of the people living on land. Sociologists, after adequate investigation, have reached the conclusion that the average density beyond a particular limit indicates an undesirable over-concentration of the people in that area. This is because the density of the population affects production and distribution and also generates various social reactions which greatly influence the total life of a society. The density of the population further affects the level of the standard of living of the people.

A systematic study of the density of the population in different regions and districts in India and also of the proportion of various groups belonging to diverse castes, religions, and vocations which comprise the population, will unfold the variegated picture of the complex social life of the Indian people with all its multiple tensions, antagonisms as well as mutual adjustments among these groups.

BIRTH AND DEATH RATE

The study of birth rates, death rates, rates of suicides, specific bodily diseases and such other matters regarding the rural population is another important aspect of a demographic study of the rural society as it reveals the quantitative and qualitative growth or decline of the rural people. Further, when this study is correlated to that of the social, economic and religious life processes of various social groups, it provides intelligent and correct criteria of evaluating the norms of those groups.

GENERAL HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

Apart from a study of the death and survival rates prevailing among the rural people, there are also other means to determine their vitality such as a study of their general health and longevity. Further, estimates of mortality prevailing among separate groups such as infants, females and old people; upper, lower and middle social strata; and land labourers, farmers, artisans, and other social categories, will give a detailed picture of the vitality of various sections of the rural people.

AGE AND SEX GROUPS

Another aspect of the life of a population which requires a close study is their distribution in age and sex groups. The analysis of age groups gives us a correct understanding of the proportion of the people who are of productive age and those who are to be sustained by the society. The preponderance of children and the aged over the working section of the people would considerably influence their economic and social life.

Similarly the analysis of the sex composition is also essential, since it is generally recognized by sociologists that "sex mores, social codes, social rituals, and social institutions are all likely to be affected where extremely unbalanced sex ratios are found."

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE PEOPLE

Caste, race, nationality and religious composition of the people has a great social significance. It gives rise to a rich, complex,

diversified social life and varied patterns of culture. More often it breeds animosities, antagonisms and conflicts. We know how in India in recent years, the multi-religious composition of the Indian people engendered ghastly communal Hindu-Muslim riots. We know how nationality conflicts are steadily corroding the body politic of India.

A very peculiar type of social grouping which is found in India is the caste grouping. A student of the Indian society who fails to study closely and carefully this variety of social grouping will miss the very essence of that society. Looking to its important rôle in India a separate chapter has been devoted to the sociological significance of caste elsewhere.

A systematic, co-ordinated and inter-related study of the rural people from various angles is an urgent need.

CHAPTER VII

ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE RURAL PEOPLE

AGRICULTURE, ITS SPECIFICNESS

Since economic production is the basic activity of a human aggregate, the mode of production (productive forces and social relations of production) plays a determining rôle in shaping the social structure, the psychology and the ideology of that human aggregate.

Rural society is based predominantly on agriculture. Village agriculture is sharply distinguished from urban industry by the fact that it is based on direct extraction from Nature by man.

Land is the basic means of production in the countryside. Land is a part of Nature, though made arable by human labour. From land, the rural people produce, by means of technique and their labour power, such a variety of agrarian products as food, cotton, jute, tea, coffee, tobacco, and others.

Urban industry only transforms the products of agriculture into industrial products. In city factories and mills, such agricultural products as cotton, jute and sugarcane are transformed into cotton and jute cloth and sugar respectively.

This basic difference between agriculture and industry plays a significant rôle in shaping the social institutions, the psychology and the ideology of the rural and urban populations.

Further, the level of production and the way in which the products are distributed among the different strata of a society, determine the level of the material prosperity of the society as a whole and of the various socio-economic groups comprising it. They also, to a very large extent, mould the institutional set up of that society as well as the cultural life of its people.

For instance, in India, the primitive nature of agriculture, the resultant low level of agricultural production and the specific types of land relations which determine the differing shares of agricultural products among the social groups composing the rural society, explain the general poverty of the rural people, their hierarchic gradation into a pyramidal system of socio-economic groups and, further, their distinct social institutions and cultural backwardness. They also largely fix their customs, conceptions, and social mores.

✓ MOTIF OF PRODUCTION

The rural sociologist should find out whether, in the given society, agricultural production has for its objective the direct satisfaction of the subsistence needs of the rural aggregate or is carried on for the market and profit of the producers who do not themselves consume their products. This means whether the agricultural economy is a subsistence or a market economy.

For instance, in pre-British India, village agriculture mainly produced for meeting the needs of the village population. This subsistence village agricultural economy was transformed into a market economy during the British period. This was due to a variety of causes. The British Government created private property in land in the form of ryotwari and zamindari. In the ryotwari area, it introduced the system under which the peasant producer had to pay to the state land tax in cash instead of in kind. The land tax grew progressively heavy resulting into the increasing indebtedness of the agriculturist. In the zamindari area, the burden of increasing rent imposed on the tenant producer by the zamindar impoverished the tenant and saddled him also with the ever expanding burden of debt. Largely due to the necessity for cash for the payment of land tax, rent and debt, the agriculturist, the peasant proprietor or the tenant, was more and more constrained to produce for the market. Thus village agriculture increasingly ceased to produce for directly satisfying the needs of the village population and began to produce for the national and subsequently even world market.

There is a third and new conception of the objective of agricultural production. According to it, not only should agriculture produce to meet the needs of the community but also it should be adapted to the *consciously assessed needs* of the total community. The exponents of this view argue that this will not only eliminate the competitive market intervening between the producers and the consumers but will also transform agriculture into planned agriculture, a planned sector of the social economy conforming to the needs of the community. They further declare that planned agriculture together with planned industry will transform the entire social economy into a planned economy which alone would make the maximum use of the natural, the technical and human labour resources of the community possible with the result that the material wealth of society would enormously increase and hence the standard of life of the people would rise higher and higher. The rural sociologist needs to devote greater attention to this aspect of the study of agricultural production. This is because not only the technique of agriculture but also the motif of agricultural production determine the level of that production and the resultant wealth of the agrarian community and, therefore, its standard of life.

TECHNIQUES OF PRODUCTION

The history of agriculture reveals that a variety of implements have been employed by rural communities. Generally speaking, we can divide the rural technical cultures into the following three types:

(1) *Hoe culture*

During this phase of mankind's existence, even the plough had not been invented. It was the early stage of agriculture when it was carried on only through the hoe operated by the human hand.

(2) *Plough culture*

During the next historical phase, man invented the plough. Being technically superior to the hoe, the plough enable the agricultural community to produce more with the expenditure of the same amount of human labour power. The plough culture implied the use of animals in agricultural operations. Though our country has advanced beyond hoe culture centuries ago, the hoe still lingers in the existing phase of plough culture in some agrarian areas.

(3) *The higher technical cultural phase of tractors and fertilizers*

The invention of power-driven machinery in modern times resulted into the production of such amazing labour-saving agricultural machines as tractors and fertilizers. Though this new agricultural technique is used on a large-scale in a number of advanced countries at present, it has not yet displaced the plough to any appreciable extent in our country.

The productivity of the labour of the agriculturist and hence the volume of agricultural products have increased in proportion to the advance of agricultural technique. The extent of the material wealth of rural society, therefore, depends mainly upon the technical basis of agriculture.

It may be noted that the power basis of agriculture has also changed in history. As pointed above, the hoe excludes the use of draft animals or any kind of power. The plough is worked with the aid of draft animals. The tractor eliminates even the necessity of draft animals and is propelled by oil power.

The technique of production also determines the division of labour among the members of a society actually engaged in the production process. It gives rise to a definite number of functions in the production process. This results in the emergence of various working groups, each of them attending to a particular function in production.

Thus we have a greater division of labour where the technique employed in production is higher. Correspondingly, we have a greater number of working groups.

Where agriculture is based on the plough, the division of labour is limited. The whole process of agricultural production in various stages is carried on by a peasant family on the basis of the simple and restricted division of labour among its members. In contrast to this, where agriculture is carried on by means of tractors and fertilizers, we have not only a larger physical unit of agriculture (land) but also a greater technical division of labour. We have then such working groups as engineers, electricians, chemists, tractor drivers and others.

The rural sociologist requires to study the various working groups determined by the technique used in agriculture as a part of the study of the rural population.

LAND RELATIONS, THEIR ROLE

Next, in the course of the study of the economic life of the rural society, it is vital to understand the land or property relations within the framework of which agricultural production is carried on.

While technique strictly determines the techno-economic division of labour and the resultant number of specific working groups, it does not, as we find from our study of history, always lead to the rise of the same property relations. For instance, the plough was the technical basis of agriculture carried on within the framework of such different land relations as existing in slave and feudal societies. It has also remained the technical basis of agriculture, in modern times, in underdeveloped capitalist societies of countries like India, Burma, Indo-China, and others. Again we find that such advanced techniques as tractors and fertilizers are used in agriculture within the framework of such diametrically opposite types of land relations as capitalist and collectivist which exist in the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union respectively.

Thus, while techno-economical relations based on functional division of labour correspond to the existing technique of agriculture, landrelations or socio-economic relations of production do not always conform to the technique in the form of a single pattern. Hence even when agriculture is carried on with the same plough, we find such varied socio-economic groups as serfs and barons, zamindars and tenants, peasant proprietors, land labourers and others. And, further, when it is worked by tractors and other kinds of modern machinery, even then we observe such diverse groups as wage workers, capitalist landowners, agriculturists who are members of state-owned collective farms and others.

(1) The nature of land relations determines the share of various socio-economic groups associated with agriculture in the total agricultural wealth. For instance, in the zamindari area, the zamindar receives by far the larger share of agricultural income than the cultivating tenant. The staggering disparity between the colossal income of the former and the meagre income of the latter is basically due to the zamindari type of land relations. Further, the agrarian economy based upon a specific type of land relations has its own logic, its own law of development. Hence we find that the general tendency of the agrarian economic development in the zamindari zone is to accentuate the economic contrast. The cultivating tenant, in spite of a series of reforms, is being increasingly impoverished.

To take another instance, where full-fledged capitalist agriculture exists, a wage worker gets from the capitalist owner of land a wage determined by the state of the labour market.

Thus land relations determine the mode of distribution of the agricultural wealth among the various sections of the rural population just as technique determines the volume of that wealth.

(2) As a consequence of the above, land relations determine the degree of enthusiasm and interest of various groups bound up with agriculture, in the process of production.

For instance, in the zamindari area, the cultivating tenant has meagre incentive to work since he has to surrender a big share of the crop, the fruit of his labour, to the zamindar and his agents. This is in contrast to the peasant proprietor in the ryotwari area, who feels appreciable incentive since he retains the whole product of his labour. However, even in his case, if he feels the burden of land tax and debt too heavy, his enthusiasm for agricultural effort would decline.

(3) Land relations play a decisive rôle in determining the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity of the rural population.

In the zamindari area, the rural society is mainly divided into such groups as zamindars, non-cultivating tenants and sub-tenants, and finally cultivating tenants. In the ryotwari area, there are generally peasant proprietors of various grades and landless workers. In the case of large-scale capitalist agriculture, there exist such groups as agrarian capitalists, farm managers, technicians, wage labourers and others.

(4) The nature of land relations which determines the share of material wealth of various sections engaged in agriculture thereby also determines the respective specific weight of those sections in the social, political and cultural life of rural society. The class of rich

zamindars or capitalist landlords, by virtue of its wealth can have leisure and material means whereby it can establish its hegemony over the life of rural society in all spheres. The mass of poor cultivating tenants or land labourers can hardly have any say in shaping it.

(5) The nature of land relations will also decide the degree of stability and social harmony in the agrarian area. For instance, in the zamindari area, due to the extensive contrast between the wealth of the zamindars and utter poverty of the cultivating tenants, there will exist a permanent condition of bitter struggle between the two classes. If poverty becomes unbearable, the struggle may even take forms which would undermine the stability of the existing rural society. In fact, contemporary India is rapidly becoming an amphitheatre of such struggles.

If we survey the past and the present history, we find that the rural society has been the arena of numerous struggles which had their genetic cause in the existing land relations. During the French Revolution the serfs wanted to abolish feudal land relations and become free peasant proprietors. The success of the communists in China is also largely explained by their skilful solution of the land problem.

The question of land relations has become the crucial question in all backward countries of the world to-day.

Thus the degree of stability or instability of the rural society is largely determined by the nature of extant land relations.

(6) Wealth is the material means to get access to education and culture specially in modern commodity society. Land relations, by basically determining the share of various agrarian social groups in the total agricultural wealth, therefore, also decide how much scope each of these groups will have for education and culture. Land relations, thus, play a big rôle in determining the degree of the intellectual and cultural development of various strata of the rural people and their individual members since this development largely depends upon the education they have received and the culture they have assimilated.

The points mentioned above reveal and emphasize the great significance of land relations in moulding the economic and hence the social, the political, the intellectual, and the cultural life of the rural people.

✓STANDARD OF LIFE

The standard of life of a village community and its sections will indicate the amount of wealth at its disposal and the manner in which it is distributed among the

of the rural community depends primarily on agriculture, and, in final analysis, on the technique used in agriculture since the higher is the technique, the greater is the productivity of agriculture. Land relations determine, as we saw above, the share of various groups comprising rural society in the total agrarian wealth. Yet even where they engender sharp contrasts of wealth among these groups, the absolute share of even the lowest group will be at a high level if the total wealth of the rural aggregate, due to advanced technique of agricultural production, is considerable. For instance, in the U.S.A. where agriculture is mechanized and, therefore, creates great agrarian wealth, in spite of the fact that agrarian capitalists make millions, the income of the wage workers on land is on a much higher level than that of the agriculturist in India.

✓The problem of the standard of life of the rural population has been keenly studied by eminent sociologists like Sorokin, Zimmerman, Sims, Kirpatrick and others. The criteria and methods laid down by them for such a study can serve as a useful guide to the students of rural society in India.

It is observed by these scholars that the standard of life of the rural people on an average is lower than that of the urban people. This is because the income of the rural people on the average is lower than that of the urban people. "Further, the standards of living of the rural population and its various groups (owners, tenants, croppers and labourers) are more homogeneous than those of the urban classes."

It has also been noted that the standard of life of the farmers approximates more to that of the lower strata of the city population. †

Though income is the primary factor determining the standard of life of a social aggregate, there are other factors also which influence it. "To be sure, income may be chiefly responsible for the existence of classes; but wholly apart from material possessions, there are class norms and values dictated by tradition." For instance, in India, the Middle class strives to adopt a standard of life according to its own specific conception of life. This is reflected in their choice of food, dress, recreations, cultural amenities and other things. Their standard of life is thus determined not merely by their economic position but also by their specific group outlook, temperament and taste. The role of caste in India as a determinant of the group standard of living demands special study.

✓It has been further observed that the degree of civilization existing in a society also influences the standard of life of the people. For instance, such institutions as well-furnished libraries, cultural and sport clubs, radio, telephone, cinema and theatre, swimming pools, restaurants and others, do not generally exist in the rural zone of India

Hence the standard of life of the rural people is not affected by them unlike that of the urban people.†

However, due to the interaction of the rural and urban societies and the resultant growth of mutual contacts, the rural people are slowly but inevitably influenced by the urban. They begin to develop a predilection and craving for such amenities. They also tend to adopt the food and dress habits of the urban population. Bicycles, modern footwear, games like cricket and football, schools, libraries, cinema, and other things associated with urban life, begin to penetrate the village. This results in gradually modifying the mode of life of the rural people.

In his study of the economic life of the rural people, the rural sociologist needs to study the impact of the more powerful influences of urban life on the rural society and hence on the standard of life of the rural people. Further, he should not take a static view of their standard of life. Human needs are not an immutable entity. They grow from phase to phase.

RURAL POVERTY, A CRYING PROBLEM

A very big section of the rural population has been living in varying states of poverty in all countries. Even in the U.S.A., the most prosperous country of the world to-day, the poverty of a large stratum of rural society has become a crying problem. As Sims remarks, "Although students of rural conditions have long been aware of the existence of country slums and of disadvantaged or submerged classes, such as the share croppers of the south (U.S.A.) no one fully realised how precarious the lot of a large part of the country population was and how quickly millions could be plunged into a state of destitution until the industrial depression revealed the true situation," and further, "all in all, it is estimated that more than one-third of the rural families of the nation have suffered poverty."

When, as seen above, a large section of the rural population of even such an economically advanced country like the U.S.A. suffers from poverty, it is no wonder that chronic poverty is rampant among the agrarian population in India, an economically much less developed country.

The immense poverty of the Indian agriculturist is proverbial and presents the fundamental problem of the programme of national economic reconstruction.

The principal causes of the rural poverty in India have been, in general, laid bare by eminent Indian economists and sociologists. Primitive agricultural technique, insufficient irrigation system, land

fragmentation, uneconomic holdings, overpressure on agriculture, alarming rural indebtedness and, above all, the existing land relations are some of its principal causes.

It is necessary to study the problem of poverty not merely of the rural people as a whole but also of its different strata and, that too, in detail.

Poverty adversely affects not only the health and vitality of the rural people but also explains their backward social and cultural conditions. If the rural people are ignorant, superstitious, uncultured, it is mostly because they are abysmally poor and cannot afford to pay for education. They, thereby, remain excluded from any access to scientific knowledge of the natural and social worlds imparted by educational and cultural institutions.

Economic prosperity is the basic prerequisite for a flourishing social and cultural life. Hence the problem of rural reconstruction at a high social and cultural level is organically bound up with the problem of the eradication of rural poverty.)

CHAPTER VIII

RURAL FAMILY

RURAL FAMILY, ITS SIGNAL IMPORTANCE

Among the institutions that compose rural society, the family is the most important. It has been its very foundation. It plays a decisive rôle in the material and cultural life of the rural aggregate and in moulding the psychological characteristics of the rural individual as well as the rural collectivity. In fact, according to some thinkers, family and familism impress their stamp on the entire rural structure. Familism permeates it from top to bottom.

A systematic study of rural family, of its structure, functions, evolution, and interrelations with other institutions of the rural society is vitally necessary for the rural sociologist.

The Indian rural society provides a classic field for the study of the institution of rural family. Within it are found many types and patterns of family organization which humanity has hitherto evolved.

FOUR MAIN PATTERNS OF FAMILY ORGANIZATION

Prof. Rivers has distinguished four types of institutions which have been designated by the term family, viz., the clan, the matrilineal joint family, the patrilineal joint family and the individual family composed of only parents and minor children.

According to one group of sociologists, these four types reveal four main stages of the evolution of the family form corresponding to four stages in the evolution of society. The first type corresponds to the hunting and food gathering stage of social evolution; the second to the phase of hoe agriculture and the beginnings of domestication of animals; the third—a classic type—to the phase of agricultural economy based on the plough and domestication of animals, and, finally, the fourth type to the modern industrial capitalist phase of human existence. As a result of the growth of market economy in the agrarian area and of the impact of urban socio-economic forces on the rural society, the last type is increasingly becoming predominant to-day.

The Indian rural society provides a great laboratory to test this view, since it includes within its fold the relics of the clan as well as matrilineal and patrilineal family types and the recent individual family

group also. A methodical study of the structure and functions of these various family types and their correlation with the stages of civilization to which they correspond will throw a floodlight on the history of Indian humanity and will enable Indian historians to evolve a correct sequence of the developmental phases of the Indian society.

PATRIARCHIAL JOINT FAMILY, ITS CHARACTERISTICS

In almost all fully developed agrarian societies depending on plough agriculture, patriarchal joint family has been found to be the predominant family form in rural areas. Outstanding rural sociologists have made a close study of the characteristics of this type of family. They have observed the basic structural, psycho-social, and functional features of this type of the rural family which distinguish it sharply from the urban family. They are as under :

(1) *Greater Homogeneity* : The rural family is far more homogeneous, stable, integrated and organically functioning than the urban family. The ties binding the members of the former, for instance the husband and the wife, parents and children, are stronger and last longer than those in the case of the urban family.

A glance at the Indian countryside will corroborate this view. The Indian village still remains a cluster of joint families though, due to a number of historico-economic causes, the joint family has been exhibiting a tendency of slow but steady disintegration.

The rural family is composed not only of the members of the family but also frequently includes distant relations which hardly happens in the dovecotes of the urban society.

(2) *Based on Peasant Household* : Another essential characteristic of the rural family is that it is generally based on the peasant household. All its members are engaged in the agricultural occupation. Works is distributed among them mainly on lines of age and sex distinctions. "The Community house, common land and common economic functions along with the common kinship bond create the peasant household."

Since the members of the rural family form a single economic unit and constantly co-operate with one another in agricultural operations, since they hold property in common usually managed by the eldest member of the family, since also they spend most of their time together, the psychological traits they develop are very similar.

(3) *Greater Discipline and Interdependence* : The rural family is characterized by greater discipline among its members than the urban family. Further, since there is considerably less state or public pro-

vision for meeting the educational, cultural, or social needs of the people in the rural area than in the urban, the rural family attempts also to satisfy these needs of its members. It thus serves as a school, a recreation centre, as well as a maternity or a non-maternity hospital.

(4) *Dominance of Family Ego*: The interdependence of the members of the rural family and the dependence of its individual member on it are, therefore, far greater than in the case of the urban family. This welds its members into a homogeneous, compact, egoistic unit, strengthens emotions of solidarity and co-operation among, them, and fills them with family pride. They develop more collectivist family consciousness and less individualistic emotion.

In a rural society, a family is discredited if any of its individual members perpetrates an infamous act. Similarly the glory of his or her achievement also accrues to the family from which he or she springs.

The urban family in contrast to the rural family, is less authoritative of the family even at the cost of their lives.

(5) *Authority of the Father*: Since the rural family is a more integrated and disciplined unit than the urban family, the head of the rural family exercises almost absolute power over its members. It is he who distributes the work of the peasant household among the family members on lines of sex and age differences; arranges marriages of sons, daughters, nephews and nieces; administers the joint family property according to his wisdom; and trains the youngsters for future agricultural work and social life. All initiative and final authority are vested in him. In fact "the head of the family has had the rights and authority to be the ruler, the priest, the teacher, the educator and the manager of the family."

Thus, the rural family, through its head, subordinates its individual members to itself. The latter are completely submerged in the family; hence they hardly develop any individuality or personality.

Such a family type can only be a nursery for the growth of family collectivism but not of individuality.

The urban family in contrast to the rural family, is less authoritarian but also less co-operative. This is due to a variety of reasons. First, it is not a single productive unit administered by the family head since its adult members are mostly engaged in occupations unconnected with, and outside the home. Further, educational, recreational and a number of other needs of its members are satisfied by extra-family institutions like school, club, and others. Property of

its earning members, too, tends to be individual, since it is derived out of extra-family occupations. In the sphere of marriage also, its members are increasingly exhibiting independence and marry persons of their own choice.

(6) *Closer Participation in Various Activities*: One striking feature of the rural family lies in the fact that its members, being engaged in work connected with the peasant household, spend practically the whole day together. In contrast to this, the members of the urban family engaged in different occupations or being educated outside home, spend only a small portion of the day together. Even their recreational centres such as clubs and others lie outside the home. Hence the home becomes only a temporary nightshed for the members of the urban family.

IMPACT OF URBANISATION ON RURAL FAMILY

Rural society has been increasingly urbanised in modern times. In proportion to its urbanization, it exhibits the characteristics of urban society. The rural family more and more develops centrifugal tendencies. Its economic homogeneity based upon a single cumulative economic activity of its members declines. Joint family property tends to be disrupted since its individual adult members begin to demand its partitioning. Being increasingly engaged in different occupations, they earn independent separate incomes which they retain as their own. They live less and less together and spend only a fraction of the day in association. They begin to seek extra-familial centres like clubs, hotels, unions, associations, cafeteria, which are also slowly growing in and around rural areas. All this results in the growth of individualistic psychology among them which weakens family emotion and egoism so vital for the vigorous functioning of a homogeneous family.

The individual hitherto submerged in, and subordinated to, the family tends to become atomistic. He more and more breaks away from the family restrictions. He develops his own initiative and independence. This inevitably results in the weakening of the family authority, family ties, and the family itself.

FAMILISM, GESTALT OF RURAL SOCIETY

According to the view of such eminent sociologists as Sorokin, Zimmerman and others, the social and political organization of all agrarian societies during their subsistence stages bears the fundamental traits of rural family, the basic unit of rural society. These traits they characterize as familism.

"Since the family has been the basic social institution of the rural social world, it is natural to expect that the whole social organization of agricultural aggregates has been stamped by the characteristics of the rural family. In other words all the other social institutions and fundamental social relationships have been permeated by, and modelled according to, the patterns of rural family relationships. Familism is the term used to designate this type of social organization. . . . Familism is the outstanding and fundamental trait in the gestalt of such a society."¹

These sociologists enumerate a number of important characteristics of such societies bearing the stamp of familism. They are as under :

(1) *Marriage Earlier and its Higher Rate* : The members of these rural societies marry at an earlier age than those of urban societies. Further, the rate of marriage in the former is higher than that in the latter.

(2) *Family, Unit of Social Responsibility* : Since family is the unit of rural society, it is the family collective that pays the taxes and discharges social responsibilities. The individual is also appraised according to the status of the family to which he or she belongs.

(3) *Family, Basis of Norms of Society* : Further, ethical codes, religious doctrines, social conceptions and legal norms governing rural societies have always condemned anything which would weaken the stability of the family. They have preached implicit obedience to parents on the part of sons and daughters and to husband on the part of wife.

(4) *Family, Its Impress in Political Form* : The political organizations of those rural societies have been also based on the conception on which rural family rests. Their political ideology has conceived the relation between the ruler and the ruled as that between the head of the family and its members, i.e., paternalistic. "King, monarch, ruler, lord have been viewed as an enlarged type of family patriarch ...the predominant type of political organization in the rural community is represented by the institution of the village elder, the head, elected by the peasants as the family elder is either openly or tacitly elected by the family members. The whole character of the village chief's authority and administration is a mere replica of the paterfamilia's authority and administration."²

¹ Systematic Sourcebook in Rural Sociology, Vol. II, p. 41.

² *Ibid*, p. 46.

(5) *Co-operative rather than Contractual Relations*: The relations between the members of the rural society are basically co-operative in contrast to those between the members of the urban society which are preponderatingly contractual. This difference, according to the view of the outstanding sociologists, is the result of the difference between the rural and urban families. "In a rural family the solidarity of its members is organic and spontaneous. . . . It springs up of itself—Naturally as a result of close co-living, co-working, co-acting, co-feeling and co-believing. Any contractual relationship between its members would be out of place and contradictory to the whole tone to family . . . it is not surprising, then, that purely contractual relationships have been but little developed in familistic societies."³ The members of the urban family on the other hand have separate interests as well as individualistic psychologies. They have more or less lost collective family feeling. The urban society bears this characteristic of the urban family. Spontaneous co-operation and solidarity-feeling are found to be appreciably less among the urban people than among the rural people.

(6) *Family, Unit of Production, Consumption and Exchange*: The economic structure of the rural society also bears the traits of the rural family. It is based on family ownership. The production and consumption are familistic. The market is less developed. Exchange has more the characteristics of simple barter than of full fledged monetary transactions. The entire code of laws regulating the economic relationships within such a society bears the stamp of familism. In contrast to this, the urban economy is predominantly a commodity economy and therefore the economic and hence the general social relations between the members of the urban society are competitive and contractual.

(7) *Dominance of Family Cult and Ancestor Worship*: The ideology and the culture of rural society also exhibit traits of familism. The cult of family dominates. Religious and other ceremonies have for their object the security and property of the family. Ancestor worship is almost universally prevalent. Even the relationships between its gods and goddesses are familistic, they being related to one another as father, mother, brother, sister, etc.

(8) *Dominance of Tradition*: As a result of all these factors rural society is marked with much less mobility than urban society. Tradition severely governs its life processes. It undergoes change with extreme slowness.

³ *Ibid*, p. 46.

RURAL FAMILY IN INDIA, ITS TRENDS

To sum up, until the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the competitive market economy, familism was the heart of village communities. Subsistence agrarian economies and rural societies based on them were familistic through and through. However, the rise and development of modern industries steadily undermined subsistence agrarian economy and brought the rural economy within the orbit of capitalist market economy. This transformation together with the growing pressure of various urban forces brought about the increasing disintegration of the old rural family. The rural society, too, more and more lost its familistic traits.

In India, due to lack of sufficient industrial development, the forces of urban society have not penetrated rural society to the same extent as in the U.S.A., Great Britain and other industrially advanced countries. The rural family consequently retains its specific traits to a far greater extent in India. Urban industrial development affects the rural family in many ways. It creates new occupations such as those of factory and workshop workers, of clerks, typists, and others. The members of the rural family develop a desire to take to those occupations, demand their share in the joint family property and migrate to towns and cities. This process undermines the joint family based on a common occupation of its members and joint family property, income and expenditure.

Modern industries produce a number of articles cheaply and on a mass scale. They reach out to the village population who purchase them. Thus the peasant family which was formerly producing cloth and other necessities with primitive techniques more and more ceases to produce them now. Thus it loses a number of its economic functions with the result that the scope of the collective labour of its members narrows down.

Capitalist economic development transforms the social and political environments of a people also. In India, British capitalism transformed the socio-economic structure of the Indian society and, further, established a centralized state. This resulted in a number of consequences. Private and state agencies increasingly established schools, dispensaries and administrative and judicial machinery in the village. The rural family which served as the school for its members no longer functioned as such, since its members now began to receive education outside the family. Also not the grandfather or the grandmother, the embodiment of traditional medical knowledge, but the doctor appointed by an agency unconnected with family, now increasingly treated the members of the family. Caste and panchayat councils were deprived of their functions as guardians of law

and dispensers of justice. The customary law was replaced by the new law of the centralized state which operated through its administrative and judicial organs. The process progressed in proportion as the urbanization of the country advanced.

The historical tendency of the rural family is towards its increasing disintegration and loss of functions. The more this tendency grows, the more the family ego and solidarity feeling cradled in and nourished by the collective labour and life of its members weaken and atomistic individualistic psychological traits develop among them.

During the last hundred and fifty years, the traditional joint family and the familistic rural framework have been undergoing a qualitative transformation. The basis of rural family relationships is shifting from that of status to that of contract. The rule of custom is being replaced by the rule of law. The family is being transformed from a unit of production to a unit of consumption. The cementing bond of the family is being changed from consanguinity to conjugality. Further, the family is ceasing to become an omnibus social agency it being shorn of most of its economic, political, educational, medical, religious and other social and cultural functions. Instead, it is becoming a specialized and affectional small association. From a massive joint family composed of members belonging to a number of generations, the family is increasingly shaping as a tiny unit composed of husband, wife and unmarried children. Familism, too, is gradually dropping off. The rural society is acquiring quite a new *gestalt*.

A systematic study of the rural family from many angles has never been so necessary as at present in India. Its methodical, intensive and extensive study will provide proper direction for evolving a programme of appropriate measures to realise grand objectives that are embodied in the Constitution of the Indian Union. Rural sociologists in India require to launch a very comprehensive campaign of study to locate the laws of the transformation of one of the most classic familistic civilizations that has emerged in the history of humanity.

CHAPTER IX

CASTE SYSTEM IN RURAL INDIA

CASTE SYSTEM, ITS UNIQUE SIGNIFICANCE

✓A very peculiar type of social grouping which is found in India is the caste grouping. A student of the Indian society, who fails to closely and carefully study this variety of social grouping, will miss the very essence of that society. In India, caste largely determines the function, the status, the available opportunities as well as the handicaps for an individual. Caste differences even determine the differences in modes of domestic and social life, types of houses and cultural patterns of the people which are found in the rural area. Even land ownership exists frequently on caste lines. Due to a number of reasons, administrative functions have also been often divided according to castes, especially in the rural area. Caste has, further, determined the pattern of the complicated religious and secular culture of the people. It has fixed the psychology of the various social groups and has evolved such minutely graded levels of social distance and superior-inferior relationships that the social structure looks like a gigantic hierarchic pyramid with a mass of untouchables as its base and a small stratum of elite, the Brahmins, almost equally unapproachable, at its apex. The Hindu society is composed of hundreds of distinct self-contained caste worlds piled one over the other.)

The increasing spread of the modern means of communication, the introduction of the British system of administration and laws, and the growth of modern capitalist competitive economy which shattered the subsistence economy of the self-sufficient village community, undermined more and more the functional basis of caste. However the transformation of self-contained rigid castes into modern mobile classes has taken place in a peculiar manner. Certain castes have been monopolizing the position of the privileged upper classes of modern society. Certain castes have been losing previous status and functions and slowly submerging into the lowest class groups of modern society. This development has created a peculiar social structure in modern India with the result that, within the existing Indian society, class struggles have been often assuming the form of caste-struggles. The student of rural society here is confronted with one of the most complex types of social transformation in the socio-economic as well as in the ideological spheres. The caste system composed of caste groups in a state of increasing decay and undergoing a transformation into modern classes in a confused way and offering stub-

born resistance to it, presents the epic spectacle of a social cyclope writhing in violent death agonies.

CASTE MATRIX, ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN INDIA

One of the most urgent tasks before the student of rural society in India is to evolve an approach which will be able to appraise the social and cultural processes of that society within the matrix of caste structure.

Failure to develop such a perspective has, in spite of an immense accumulation of economic and other factual data, obstructed the elaboration of a living composite picture of rural society. The rural sociologist should concentrate on the following vital problems :

CASTE AND ECONOMIC LIFE

The economic life of rural society should be studied in context of caste, in its interrelation and interaction with caste.

(1) *Production*: In the field of production the rural sociologist should study the extent to which functional and propertied groups correspond to castes.

Such a study, for instance, as that of Bhuvel has revealed how reveal how far the new economic and political forces have undermined the homogeneous functional basis of old castes and also the distribution of property among them. It will thereby disclose the degree of disintegration and alteration of the status, privileges, and social and political significance of various castes. Secondly, it will enable us to comprehend the attitude of the Hindu as well as the Indian Mahomedans too, who are affected by the caste phenomena, towards the hierarchically graded caste structure of society as well as their reaction to the process of change which it is experiencing.

Such a study, for instance, as that of Bhuvel has revealed how in some parts of the Central Gujarat, the Rajputs who owned land are declining in their social and economic status being increasingly supplanted by the Patidars.

(2) *Consumption*: In the field of consumption the rural sociologist requires to study how castes greatly mould the pattern of consumption of respective caste groups. For instance, caste appreciably fixes the food and dress habits or the choice of utensils and other articles of its members. This caste-determined mode of consumption reacts on and influences production. The pure economic theory of consumption would be misleading and result into incorrect conclusions unless

its modification due to the intervention of the caste institution is taken into account.

(3) *Indebtedness*: The rural indebtedness, a striking feature of rural economic life, also requires to be studied in context of caste. Dr. R. K. Nehru has vividly pointed out in his exploratory study of a few villages what close relation exists between caste and indebtedness and credit in the rural area. Certain castes are predominantly composed of members who are almost hereditary debtors; some others of those who are mainly creditors. The rural sociologist should study the social and economic milieu and find out why it is so.

(4) *Habitat*: Caste also largely determines the type of houses its members reside in, their housing habits and the choice of village area where these houses are located. The village is generally divided into areas, each inhabited by the members of a particular caste. Further, even when some members of a caste cease to pursue the caste-determined vocation, they generally continue to reside in the same area and socially interact with other members of their caste.

(5) *Mobility*: Another significant problem which requires to be studied is the co-relation between caste and economic mobility of the rural people. As a result of the operation of the forces of economic evolution of Indian society, a slow but steady and constant interchange of functions among various castes has been taking place. Members of a caste gradually cease to perform the caste-determined function and take to occupations which other caste groups are engaged in. Further, for the same reason some castes slide down the economic ladder while some castes go up the ladder. Since these changes have an effect on the development of the rural economy and its nature, their specific study is necessary.

CASTE AND JOINT FAMILY LIFE

The study of the rural society should include the study of how caste and joint family—its two dominant social institutions—influence the social life of the rural individual and the rural aggregate. They are powerful forces determining their social activities and thereby play a big role in moulding their psychology and ideology. As observed elsewhere, a caste in the rural area is generally a cluster of joint families. Hence, the caste moulds the nature of the life of those families.

CASTE AND EDUCATIONAL LIFE

Caste also largely determines the attitude of the rural man towards education and even fixes the nature of the education which he intends to receive. A Brahmin child will, due to caste tradition, gene-

rally receive education and that too predominantly religious in contrast to the Bania child who will be given secular education and the child of a depressed class who would forego all education. Further, it must be noted that education is not evaluated from the standpoint of individual development or social advance but from that of the caste tradition.

CASTE AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

How religious life is determined rigorously by caste, especially in the rural area, also deserves to be studied. While in cities religious practices are slowly shrinking, in villages they flourish luxuriantly even now. It is the caste that rigidly determines the place of its member in the religious life of the people.

CASTE AND POLITICAL LIFE

Caste influences the political life to a greater extent in the rural area than in the urban centres. This is because caste consciousness is stronger among the rural people than among the urban people. Choice or rejection of candidates as well as the nature of propaganda in political elections are determined by caste considerations more in villages than in towns and cities. Caste ego is stronger among the rural people and hence exerts a powerful influence in shaping the political life of the rural aggregate. In contrast to this, extra-caste considerations considerably influence political prejudices and predilections of the urban population.

CASTE AND VALUE SYSTEMS OF THE COMMUNITY

Since caste largely determines the ideals and patterns of life of the rural social groups, it also considerably shapes the value systems prevailing in the rural society. The value patterns of the rural society bear a far greater impress of caste traditions than those of the urban society where extra-caste institutions and ideologies operate.

CASTE AND TYPES OF RURAL LEADERSHIP

Caste plays a big role in determining the nature and the personnel of the leadership of the rural society. Caste leaders are generally leaders also of the social, economic, political and ideological life of the rural society. As a consequence of this, caste struggles are often co-eval with social, political, economic and ideological struggles in the rural zone.

The study of the role of caste in the life of the Indian rural aggregate in all its spheres is thus vitally necessary for getting a correct picture of the Indian rural society and its life processes.

MUTUAL ATTITUDES OF CASTE GROUPS, THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

It is further necessary to study the actual functioning of the caste and the subjective reactions of its members to that functioning. A proper study of such subjective reactions of different caste groups to the almost all-pervasive functioning of caste will enable the rural sociologist to comprehend that fundamental social phenomenon called social distance in the Indian rural society. It will explain the emergence and development of various grades of social superiority and inferiority complexes rampant among the rural people. It will also disclose how those subjective reactions of various groups crystallize as different group psychologies which express themselves in various cultural patterns.

CASTE SYSTEM, A LABORATORY TO STUDY SOCIAL DISTANCE

The study will also enable him to comprehend what type of consciousness arises out of a social life mainly moving within the caste matrix. It will also aid the rural sociologist in his indispensable study of those socio-historic forces, which, across centuries, brought into existence the most complex and elaborate, the most systematised and logically worked out structure of organised and minutely graded group inequality, viz. the caste system in India.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND ITS IMPACT ON CASTE

The problem has acquired a special significance for the contemporary Indian people for a number of reasons. First, the constitution of the Indian Union has assumed as its postulate the individual citizen and not caste as the unit of Indian society. Secondly, it has laid down equality of citizens and not hierarchically graded privileges based on the caste as the principle of state legislation. It has chosen as its objective a democratic social order free from inequality and special privileges. Finally, the existing socio-economic structure is also based on the principle of contract between free and equal individuals and not on caste privilege. Individual contract and not caste status is the basis of all rights and responsibilities today.

CASTE AND HINDUISM

This shift from the caste to the individual as the unit of society has brought about convulsive changes in Indian society transforming old social relations. It has been dealing shattering blows to the orthodoxy of Hinduism and the caste social order of the Hindus. The socio-psychological patterns, the religio-ethical norms and even the philosophical outlook of the Hindus determined by the old Hinduism are being increasingly undermined as the process of the trans-

formation of the social relations advances. A democratic conception of social relations in all fields, social, legal, political, economic and cultural, is progressively replacing the former hierarchic conception of those relations. A study of the caste and of the process of its steady dissolution today will, further, inevitably make it necessary for the rural sociologist to study the historical genesis of caste and also of the Hindu religion and the Hindu culture which are closely bound up with it. It will also show whether Hinduism can survive as an ideology without the existence of caste, the social institutional expression and concretization of Hinduism.

A research in the subject of the origin of caste will also require a study of (i) past economic evolution of Indian society which at a certain stage made caste historically inevitable, (ii) its subsequent role as a formidable obstacle to further economic and cultural development of Indian society and (iii) contemporary forces which are steadily undermining caste and therefore also probably weakening Hinduism as an ideology and a culture.

JOINT FAMILY, CASTE, AND VILLAGE COMMUNITY, THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Joint family, caste and village community were the basic social institutions of the pre-British Indian rural society. It is the task of the rural sociologist to study the relations between them.

The process of dissolution of those institutions, however slow, commenced, as previously stated, with the impact of British contact after the conquest of India. It must be noted that the autarchic village had been the socio-economic unit of Indian society during the period of agrarian civilization based on a subsistence economy which intervened between the food gathering phase of social existence and the modern phase of competitive nation-scale capitalistic civil society founded on national economy and mobile classes. One unique feature of social evolution in India was that primitive food gathering tribal society was not historically succeeded by a society based on a slave mode of production as in Greece and Rome or by a society based on a feudal mode of production with serf labour which developed in the Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Slavery or serfdom was never the basis of social production in the long history of Indian society though the phenomenon of slavery might have crept in here and there. Due to complex ecological and socio-historical reasons, primitive collective tribal society seems to have been superseded in India by a unique type of society which persisted for a remarkably long period. It began to disintegrate only after the contact with the capitalist West in modern times.

Extensive historical research dealing with the most remote periods of past history of the Indian people together with the utmost exercise of the power of historical inference guided by a scientific theory of social development, are needed to trace the causes of the genesis of village communities in India. It is necessary to locate the peculiar ecological and socio-historical factors which brought about the emergence of a unique type of social structure based on those autarchic and collectively land-possessing village communities in India. Thereafter, it is necessary to probe into the problem whether caste arose as a socio-economic institution adapted to the exigencies of such a social formation.

DOCTRINE OF CASTEISM AND BRAHMINIC SUPREMACY

The next problem which the rural sociologist should investigate is whether the doctrine of immutable casteism propagated by the Brahmins was the inevitable theoretical outgrowth of a society which remained unaltered and stationary for a remarkably long period as a result of unchanging technique and resultant unvarying division of labour. Was it because caste persisted for ages and subsequently became rigid and ossified, that an illusion was generated in the consciousness of the Hindu humanity that it was immutable ?

It is also vital to comprehend why the Brahmin caste exercised ideological and social dictatorship over the Hindu people for centuries with rare episodic interruptions like the challenge of Buddhism and a few others ? Was it because the Hindu people living in such a stationary society as mentioned above developed an organic predisposition to docilely accept and submit to authority and tradition ? Was it, therefore, that they surrendered themselves to the social and ideological sway of the Brahmins who were not only the architect of authoritarian social and religious philosophies but were also the repository and monopolist of whatever scientific knowledge, astronomical, agronomical, medical and other, which existed in the past ? Even regarding the uncanny forces of nature, they were the Brahmins who alone were supposed to have the religio-magical power of propitiating and mastering them through rites, incantations and other devices.

STUDY OF ORIGINS OF CASTE, ITS VITAL SIGNIFICANCE

Numerous theories have been advanced to explain the origin, development, crystallization and ultimate petrification of the caste system. Most of them have been offered in the spirit of surmises only. The rest, though they have illuminated the problem, have given partial solution of it. A consciously planned out, systematic and still deeper study of the problem of caste, historically and in its

complex interconnections with other social developments, has still to be made.

To unravel this problem it is necessary to study the ecological conditions of India in the past, which resulted in the peculiar economic development of Indian society and gave rise to the peculiar type of social formation as the village community. This may provide a valuable clue to the solution of the problem of the origin of caste. Then alone the significance of caste which has played such a powerful role in past Indian society and which is still playing considerable role in the life of the Indian people in general and the Indian rural people in particular can be fully grasped.

CHAPTER X

POLITICAL LIFE OF THE RURAL PEOPLE

POLITICAL ASPECT OF RURAL LIFE, INSUFFICIENTLY STUDIED

One of the vital problems which requires to be intelligently studied by the rural sociologist is the political life of the rural people. Writers on rural problems as well as social workers in the rural area have generally paid insufficient attention to this aspect of the rural life. They have often presumed that the agrarian population is politically almost an inert mass and have attempted to evolve and work out schemes of better villages on that premise. However, nothing is more unreal in modern times than the hypothesis of the political inertness of the rural people. When we study modern history, we find that the agrarian masses, predominantly composed of farmers, have participated in mighty political movements in a number of countries. For instance, in India, large sections of peasants and artisans supported and joined the great National Revolt of the Indian people against the British rule in 1857. Subsequently peasant struggles like the Deccan Peasant Riots and others directed both against the moneylenders and the government broke out in some parts of the country. In more recent times, increasing sections of the peasantry participated in a series of national political movements like the Non-co-operation Movement of 1919-24, Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34, a number of political satyagraha campaigns in different districts, Quit India Movement and others. After 1934 the peasant masses even started building their own class organizations like kisan sabhas and launched a number of struggles against the government and landlords. During and immediately after the partition of India, the peasant discontent and restlessness found a distorted political expression in bloody communal clashes which occurred in a number of provinces.

Recent history also records such peasant struggles as took place in Telangana and in portions of Bengal and Assam.

In other countries, too, the agrarian masses have taken part, sometimes even decisive, in political movements. Tens of millions of peasants participated in such world shaking revolutions as the Russian and the Chinese. Large sections of Indonesian and Burmese peasantry also took part in a series of political struggles having national independence as their objective. Peasant masses constituted the preponderant social force of the resistance movements in France, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary and other European countries which develop-

ed during the period of occupation of those countries by Nazi Germany. Also in recent decades the agricultural populations of Spain, Italy, Latin American countries and others have exhibited considerable political awakening, formed sometimes their own political parties and have launched numerous political struggles.

These events explode the misconception that agrarian population is politically a passive force.

In fact, the growth of political consciousness among peasant populations and their increasing political activity are striking features of the political life of mankind to-day.

The agrarian areas of a number of countries have been transformed into stormcentres of militant political activity of the rural people.

ITS STUDY IN INDIA, A VITAL NEED

The following are the two main reasons why it becomes imperative for the rural sociologist in India to study the political life of the rural people to-day.

(1) The Constitution of the now independent India has provided universal adult suffrage to the Indian people. Tens of millions of peasants who constitute the majority of the population thereby acquire a political status. Their will expressed through the ballot box would now considerably influence the political life of the nation. This is a unique event in the long history of Indian humanity, for, it is for the first time that the people including the rural masses have secured the democratic right to determine who will rule them. The theory of the divine right of the king or a "providence ordained" imperialist power to rule the people has been ousted by that of the democratic right of the sovereign people to determine their political destiny. Universal adult suffrage serves as a powerful ferment in the life of the rural people making them politically conscious to a phenomenal degree. It is a momentous event in the history of the rural society.

The new situation has posed a number of fresh questions for the rural sociologist. How will the rural people, illiterate, ignorant and superstitious in the main, exercise their franchise? What social, economic, and ideological influences will determine their voting? What types of political organisations will the peasant masses throw up for implementing a programme embodying their conception of a good society by legislative means? What political parties will emerge in the rural area, corresponding to various layers of the existing stratified rural society? What repercussions will take place in the sphere of social and ideological life of the rural people due

to the mass-scale growth of political consciousness and activity among them due to their acquisition of adult suffrage? How will this political equality affect caste and other social as well as cultural and economic inequalities?

The study of these new problems will form an integral part of the study of the Indian rural society.

(2) A proper understanding of the political life of the rural people is necessary also for another reason. Unlike in the pre-British period, the modern state plays a decisive role in determining the life of the rural society. During the pre-British phase, the village, as we have seen previously, was an autarchic and almost autonomous unit. During the British period, it experienced a basic transformation. Its self-contained subsistence economy based on self-sufficient agriculture and artisan industry was undermined.

Further, the British Government established a centralized state with an administrative machinery which penetrated the hitherto autonomous village. This basically changed the political physiognomy of the village. It became a unit of the countrywide political and administrative system.

The consequences of this economic and political transformation were far-reaching. The village population no longer lived an almost hermetically sealed existence but was drawn into the wider whirlpool of the national and international economic and political life. Thenceforward the economic, political, and other problems of the rural community had to be considered in the wider context of national and world politics and economy as well as of the policies of the central government.

THREE MAIN LINES OF STUDY

A systematic study of the rural political life may be made on the following lines :

- (a) The study of the governmental machinery in the rural area.
- (b) The study of the non-governmental political organizations in the rural area.
- (c) The study of the political behaviour of the rural people and its various sections.

A few observations on each of these are made below :

(a) GOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY

The study of the governmental machinery can be divided into two parts : (i) the study of the structure of the administration and its functioning within the village and (ii) the study of the administrative machinery of larger units like Talukas, Districts, Regions and States.

In the pre-British period, when the state did not interfere in the life of the village beyond claiming a portion of the village produce as land revenue and occasionally levying troops, the village administration was carried on by the village panchayat composed of elected or customary representatives of various castes, generally elders of the castes, or by a village headman with the panchayat as the consultative body. The village panchayat was the link between the village population and the higher authority. The panchayat and the headman maintained peace in the village, settled disputes among the villagers, looked after the sanitation and other matters of common concern of the village population, determined and collected the share of the farmer family in the collective land revenue to be paid to the state on behalf of the village, and also regulated the use of collectively owned pasture land and forest area in the periphery. Thus from the standpoint of administration the village was autonomous.

The administrative, judicial, policing, and economic functions of the village were, as seen above, performed by the village panchayat and the headman. So far as the personal, social, and religious life of the village people was concerned, the customary law governing it was operated by various caste councils which regulated the behaviour-patterns of respective castes.

The disintegration of empires did not affect the administrative autonomy and general internal life of the village. This was because the state, even the Imperial state, restricted its intervention in the internal affairs of the village to the mere gathering of the tribute and the levying of the troops generally in war time. The state or the king looked after the inter-village administration and other vital matters affecting the people of the kingdom as a whole such as coinage, irrigation, and the maintenance and development of the network of roads.

With the advent of the British rule in India, as we have stated before, the Indian society began to experience a fundamental economic and political transformation. The new administrative machinery evolved and organized by Britain in India supplanted the old one which had functioned for centuries with little variation. The

new state, the organ of British rule in India, stationed its own revenue, judicial, police and other officials in the village. The village lost its administrative autonomy and the caste councils, their penal powers. In the new political set up, the village became the basic administrative unit of a hierarchically graded countrywide administrative system.

The local village officials were independent of any control over them by the village population. Thus if the forest had to be cleared, wells to be dug or roads to be built in the village, it was not now the village panchayat which independently and of its own will evolved a scheme and mobilized the village population for implementing that scheme. It was the new village administration, itself a unit of the national administrative system and subject to the latter's control, that decided those questions.

Henceforward the social, political and economic life of the rural people, was largely determined by the state. Village problems became an integral part of the total problems of the nation and could not be solved in isolation by the initiative of the village community.

The character and policies of the government appreciably determined how those problems would be solved and hence what type of life the rural people would live.

After independence, the Indians retained the centralized state apparatus elaborated by the British in India. The rural sociologist needs to study the working of the administrative system inherited from the British in the new national situation. It should be noted that this administrative system had been devised by them as a lever to suppress or restrict the initiative of the people. A critical evaluation of this system from the standpoint of the solution of such problems of the rural population as their general economic advance, universal spread of education, cheap and expeditious justice, awakening and play of the local initiative within the framework of the national plan, and others, has, therefore, to be made and a scheme of reconstruction of the existing administrative system evolved.

The study of the administrative system raises the following problems :

- (i) How far the administrative machinery is responsive to the opinions and wishes of the people.
- (ii) How far the people are associated with it and participate in its functioning.
- (iii) How far it is cheap, efficient, and sensitive to the problems of the people.

(b) NON-GOVERNMENTAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

It is further necessary to note that the governmental activity is only one aspect of the political life of the village population. Non-governmental political organizations also have emerged and are functioning in the rural area in modern times. Political parties thrown up by the rural people are principal among them.

It is very essential to study the various political parties operating in the rural area. These parties express the specific interests and aspirations of various classes and socio-economic groups composing the rural people such as landlords, tenants, land labourers, peasant proprietors and others. They voice their desire and determination to secure political power and use it to modify or overhaul the existing social system in consonance with their own interests and social objectives. The rural area becomes the arena of struggle between these parties. To have a concrete composite picture of the political life of the rural people it is, therefore, vitally necessary to study closely the ideologies, the programmes and the policies of these political parties and trace their social roots. The two general elections recently held in our country on the basis of the new constitution have revealed the extensive growth of political consciousness among the rural people, the expansion of the old political parties and the emergence of new ones in the rural area and, above all, large scale participation of the rural people in the elections. Paradoxically enough, voting in some rural areas even exceeded that in urban zones. Further, large sections even of illiterate peasant women registered their vote, an event of great political significance.

The student of rural society should also study the changing political moods of the rural people and the resultant increase or decline in the influence of different political parties among them. He should further investigate, by means of a sociological analysis, the causes which bring about the rise and fall of political parties in the rural area. He can predict on the basis of such a study the tendency of the development of the political life of the rural people. Such a study is very vital, since the victory of a political party in a country implies its capture of government machinery which it intends to use as an instrument to alter or replace the existing socio-economic structure of society in the interests of the class or the social group which it represents. For instance, in India, the Socialist or the Communist Party desires to win political power so that it can use it to abolish capitalism and establish socialism. The Hindu Mahasabha aspires for political power to establish the Hindu Raj and reconstruct Indian society in conformity with the Hindu ideals. The Indian National Congress, the ruling party in India, is working for a society based on

a mixed social economy with two sectors, private and state owned, and secular democracy.

(c) POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR OF RURAL PEOPLE

Another aspect of the rural political life deserving study is the political behaviour of the rural people. The study must be made from two angles.

PROGRAMMES

First, the rural sociologist should study the various programmes which various strata of the rural people or the rural people as a whole are striving to fulfil.

These programmes will disclose the basic social aspirations and the immediate needs of the rural people and its various sections. The nature of these aspirations and needs will also disclose the psychologies and ideologies of the rural people and its constituent groups at a given historical moment.

For instance, some decades back, the cultivating tenants in the zamindari tract considered the zamindari system as immutable and merely desired and asked for a humane treatment from the zamindars. Subsequently, increasing sections of them questioned the zamindari system itself and put forth the demand for the abolition of landlords and transfer of land to themselves. They also aspired for a workers' and peasants' Raj which they previously did not even conceive of.

The rural sociologist is required to concentrate special attention on the study of the programme and the political behaviour of peasantry since it constitutes the major section of the rural people and, therefore, would exert decisive influence on the future of the rural society. The peasant movements in a number of countries in recent times have been transforming the entire social, political, and economic landscape in the agrarian area.

Secondly, the rural sociologist should make a thorough study of the methods which the rural people have been adopting to realize their aims.

METHODS TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMMES

Different sections of the rural people make use of different methods to implement their programmes at various times.

Indian rural society provides a classical laboratory for the study of a rich variety of these methods. The following are the principal among them.

1. Petitioning.
2. Voting.
3. Demonstrations and marches.
4. Hijrats or mass emigrations.
5. Satyagraha, passive resistance.
6. No-rent and no-tax campaigns.
7. Spontaneous elemental revolts.
8. Organized armed struggles.
9. Guerilla warfare.

Peasant populations in different countries in the present epoch have been employing diverse methods to implement their programmes. In India, too, as previously stated, these varied methods have been used in varying degrees by the agrarian population in different parts of the country in different periods. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a section of the Maharashtrian peasantry took to spontaneous armed struggle known as the Deccan Peasant Riots against moneylenders and the government. Mahatma Gandhi organized a number of no-tax campaigns of the peasantry in various parts of India. Subsequently a series of peasant demonstration including millions of peasants, men and women, have utilized the the Socialist Party of India. In Telangana, a combination of the methods of open armed struggle and guerilla warfare was adopted by the peasantry led by the Communist Party only a few years back.

In the two General Elections held very recently, the rural population including millions of peasants, men and women, have utilized the method of the ballot box and elected representatives to the State Assemblies and the House of the People.

Thus the rural people have used at various times parliamentary as well as extra-parliamentary methods of struggle to achieve their aims and demands.

A sociological analysis of the programmes of the rural people as a whole and its constituent strata as well as of the varied methods employed by them specially becomes necessary when the agrarian society is in a state of deep crisis and is simmering with great discontent of the rural masses in the major part of the world including India.

ROLE OF LAND RELATIONS IN RURAL POLITICS

Since agriculture is the pivot of the rural economy and land is the most important means of production in agriculture, the struggle between the various groups of the rural society has mainly revolved round the question of the ownership of land. As has been almost universally recognized by sociologists and statesmen all over the world, the problem of land relations is the basic problem in all backward or semi-backward countries of Asia and even of some countries of Europe like Spain and Italy. The peasant movements in those countries have had as their basic objective the abolition of feudal or semi-feudal forms of land ownership and transfer of land to the actual tillers.

Struggle over the question of land has, in fact, provided the main dynamic to the political life of the rural society in the present period.

Different sections of the rural people hold different views on the land problems which are determined by their differing specific position in the socio-economic structure of the rural society. The viewpoints of the landlords, the tenants, the land labourers, the peasant proprietors, and the moneylenders and the merchants to whom the peasant debtors have mortgaged their land, vary widely. The divergence of views which expresses divergence of material interests of these groups, is the genetic cause of the economic and political struggles between them, struggles which nowadays form an essential part of the political life of the rural people.

This inter-group struggle among the various sections of the rural people revolving round the land problem has not been adequately and scientifically studied hitherto by the student of the rural society. A historically progressive solution of the land problem is a crucial need since the future of the rural society, its retrogression or further advance, depends upon it.

POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND CASTE

In the Indian rural area where the occupational homogeneity of the caste is not still seriously undermined and where caste consciousness among the people remains stronger than in the urban centre, caste influences the political life to a much greater extent than it does in towns and cities. In recent times, however, due to the growth of class consciousness among various groups into which the rural population is divided on economic lines, the influence of caste on the political life is slowly diminishing. For instance, non-Brahmin landlords will politically ally with Brahmin landlords rather than with his non-Brahmin tenants since both the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin landlords stand

for the defence of landlordism, their common economic interest. Similarly, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin tenants will more and more come together and form a kisan sabha or a peasant party with the programme of abolition of landlordism and transfer of land to the tillers of land, both Brahmin and non-Brahmin.

In India, where the old caste system of the Hindus still exists and is strong, special attention should be paid to its role in determining political life. Often even when a caste is not occupationally homogeneous and does not, therefore, correspond to a socio-economic group, the caste allegiance amongst its members is so strong that they may politically support caste leaders who belong to another socio-economic group.

It should, however, be noted that, due to historical reasons, the caste and the socio-economic group often correspond to a great extent in various parts of the country. For instance, a good proportion of the farmers-tenants in Maharashtra happen to belong to the non-Brahmin caste while a good proportion of the landlords to the Brahmin caste. Due to this the party of the peasantry has an overwhelmingly non-Brahmin social composition. This often blurs the fact that, judged from the standpoint of the basic aim and demands of the organization, it is the party of a socio-economic group, a class. Caste in this case obscures the class content of the party. The specific weight of caste in the political life of the rural people is still great and the rural sociologist has to assess it carefully.

CHAPTER XI

RURAL RELIGION

STUDY OF RURAL RELIGION, REASONS

A thorough study of rural religion and its significant role in determining the life processes of the rural society should form an essential part of the study of that society. The following are the principal reasons for this :

First, it has been observed by sociologists all over the world that the rural people have a greater predisposition to religion than what the urban people have. The dependence of agriculture—the basic form of production in the countryside—on the hitherto unmastered forces of nature like rains and the near absence of scientific culture, which provides a correct understanding of the natural and social worlds, among the rural people, are two main reasons for the greater degree of religiosity among them. Traditional religion composed of the crudest conceptions of the world holds their mind in its grip. Animism, magic polytheism, ghost beliefs and other forms of primitive religion, are rampant among the rural people to a far greater extent than among the urban people.

Secondly, the religious outlook of the rural people overwhelmingly dominates their intellectual, emotional and practical life. It is difficult to locate any aspect of their life which is not permeated with and coloured by religion. Their family life, caste life, general social life, economic and even recreational life, are more or less governed by a religious approach and religious norms. Religious conceptions also largely dominate their ethical standards ; the form and content of their arts like painting, sculpture, architecture, folk-songs and others ; as also their social and economic festivals.

This is specially true of societies based on subsistence economies of the pre-capitalist epoch when religion was almost completely fused with social life and when even the then existing secular scientific knowledge of man—physiology, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, agronomy, mechanics, sociology, ethics, etc.—was clothed in religious garb and was the monopoly of the priestly caste.

Thirdly, in societies based on subsistence economies, the leadership of the village life in all domains was provided by the priestly group, in India the Brahmins. Mores, which this group laid down for the individual behaviour as well as for social control, were deter-

mined by the traditional religious concepts. Hence the life of the village aggregate in all spheres was moulded in the spirit of religious ideas and dogmas and was controlled by religious institutions and leaders.

Fourthly, a new development took place in modern times in India after the advent of the British rule. The social, economic and political life of the village, as stated elsewhere, experienced a progressive transformation. The development and spread of capitalist economic forms led to the disintegration of the subsistence economy of the autarchic village. Further, a new and secular centralized state took over the administration of the village from the village panchayat and caste councils whose outlook was essentially religious and who were generally guided by religious conceptions and criteria even in secular matters.

In the new economic and political environs, new norms, basically non-religious and secular and derived out of a liberal democratic philosophy, emerged and began increasingly to supersede the authoritarian religious norms which for ages had governed even the secular life of the village population. The village people for the first time in history felt the impact of secular, and democratic and equalitarian ideas on their consciousness. A new ferment began to spread among them which has been steadily affecting their life and outlook hitherto coloured with religion. Also new secular institutions and associations, new secular leadership and social controls, began to emerge within the rural society.

This has resulted in a slow but steady decline in the hegemony and control of the leaders of religion over the life of the rural population.

It must be noted that, even then, religion still continues to exercise a powerful hold over the mind of the rural people and determines their behaviour in a number of secular fields. However, as a result of the operation of such modern material and ideological forces as modern means of transport like buses and railways and democratic secular ideas, as also due to the growth of secular economic and political movements of the rural masses, the historical tendency, though admittedly very slow, is towards a dereligionizing of increasing sectors of secular life of the rural people as also of their attitude towards purely secular matters.

The contemporary rural society in India has become a battle ground of struggle between the forces of religious orthodoxy and authoritarian social conceptions on the one hand and those of secular democratic advance on the other. It is essential for the student of Indian rural society to follow this conflict.

RURAL RELIGION VS. URBANIZED RELIGION

Crude forms of religion comprising animism, magic, polytheism, mythology, ghost beliefs and others, which exercise sway over the mind of the rural population, should be distinguished from the refined and subtle types of religion and religious philosophy which are prevalent in cities among the urban intelligentsia. These refined and subtle religions and religious philosophies have been elaborated by great idealistic thinkers out of daring philosophical speculations on basic problems of life such as the problems of the nature of ultimate reality, the genesis of human knowledge and others, which markedly distinguish them from the naive religious beliefs generated in the rural atmosphere.

While rural religion tends to be crude and concrete in form, urbanized religion has tended to be abstract. While the rural population worships and falls prostrate before a multitude of gods and goddesses derived out of their animistic conception of the universe, the cultured educated section of the urban humanity subscribes to the idealistic view of the universe and discusses such categories as the nature of Brahman, Free Will and others.

Further, even critical rationalism and philosophical materialism as minority philosophical currents flourish in urban centres.

The rural sociologist needs to distinguish between the crude, almost static, rural religion and the refined and highly abstract urbanized religion which soars in the stratosphere of speculative thought and grapples with ontological, epistemological and other basic problems of philosophy. Further, he should also note that rationalist and materialist philosophical thought currents found in the urban society are almost absent in the rural area.

The roots of rural religion lie principally in the great, almost abysmal, ignorance and resultant fear of the forces of environment prevailing among the rural people. Refined urban religion, even if based on the erroneous idealistic interpretation of the world, is not born of mere fear. This distinction regarding the psychological roots of rural and urban religions is important.

THREE ASPECTS OF RURAL RELIGION

The rural religion should be studied in its following three important aspects :

1. Rural religion as providing a specific world outlook, a specific view of the universe :

2. Rural religion as prescribing a body of religious practices to the rural people; and
3. Rural religion as an institutional complex.

Each of these three vital aspects of the rural religion needs a few observations.

1. AS A WORLD OUTLOOK

The world outlook provided by the rural religion includes such ingredients as (a) magical conceptions, (b) animism, (c) the conception of a bizarre world peopled by spirits, (d) the conception of a posthumous world of dead ancestors who have to be worshipped, and (e) mythology.

The most striking feature of the rural religion is its dynamic conception of the universe, i.e., the conception of the universe as a theatre of the interplay of conscious freely acting elements. The rural religion unfolds such worlds as *PITRULOK*, *PRETLOK*, *DEVLOK*, and *VAIKUNTH DHAM*, i.e., the worlds of dead ancestors, disembodied spirits, gods and goddesses, as also the celestial world. It also, in addition, conjures up worlds peopled by such deities as those of fertility, various epidemics, rivers and forests. In fact, the rural religion sees spirits practically behind all phenomena and creates a phantasmagoria of numerous uncanny worlds of spirits.

Such a world outlook is fundamentally born of the profound ignorance of the forces of nature and of the nature of man. Ignorance breeds fear and these two are the interrelated twin sources of the world outlook fashioned by the crude rural religion.

Since the world outlook, consciously or unconsciously, largely determines the social, ethical and other views of the individual and the social aggregate as well as their behaviour, its study forms an indispensable part of the study of the rural society.

2. AS A BODY OF PRACTICES

The body of religious practices prescribed by the rural religion is imposing. These practices may be divided into the following three groups :

(a) *Prayers*. The individual is enjoined to offer prayer to various deities at home as well as outside the home. At home he is required to pray to the family god or goddess. The prayers are offered by the members of the family at the family altar.

Every caste generally worships a special deity and maintains, if possible, caste temples where the deity is installed. All members of the caste are exhorted to regularly offer prayers to the deity, a god or a goddess.

Further, every street or locality in the village has its own deity, generally a goddess, *MOHOLLA MATA* to whom the people residing in the locality have to offer prayers, specially during the *NAVA-RATRA* religious festival.

There is also the village temple in which the village god is installed. Community prayers have to be offered to him.

Further, prayers are offered also to the river goddess if the village is situated on a river, to the forest deity and to other deities of the locality.

In addition, prayers have to be offered also to some or all gods and goddesses common to all Hindus.

The prayer and worship aspect of the rural religion deserves a careful study because, in recent times, sections of the Hindus—the depressed classes—, who were denied the right of temple entry, organized a number of struggles to secure that right. The issue of the right to enter public temples and worship and offer prayers to deities even became a political issue.

(b) *Sacrifices*. The rural religion prescribes a variety of sacrificial acts to its adherents, which range from the sprinkling of some drops of water and scattering of leaves or grains in front of various deities to the offering of animal and, though rarely, even of human sacrifices to them. The rural religion is composed of various sub-religions and each sub-religion prescribes to its followers a particular set of sacrificial acts.

Sacrifices are offered to a variety of gods and goddesses. There are the food god (*ANNADEVATA*), the gods of different diseases (*BALIAKAKA AND OTHERS*), the rain god, the river goddess, and a plethora of others. Sacrifices are offered to propitiate them and thereby disarm their wrath or win their favour.

A sociological analysis of sacrifices is valuable for comprehending the conceptions of the rural people of the causes of diseases, floods and other devastating phenomena. It can also provide a clue to their social habits and styles of living. It will reveal their attitudes to the world and life. It may assist the rural sociologist to grasp how various castes practising different kinds of sacrificial acts, thereby, develop a hierarchic conception of the caste series. Such a study can further

help him to explain certain psychological and cultural traits of different social groups. And finally it may aid him in tracing the past-history of Indian society, social, economic and cultural, of which the concept and practice of sacrifices were an organic outgrowth. Sacrifices to particular deities have a specific character and hence presuppose a specific concept of each deity. Those deities were born in the field of human consciousness at a certain stage in the socio-economic development of society. Mythology, in fact, is the history of society in terms of symbolism and since society changes, the pantheon of gods and goddesses too changes.

The rural society has at present become the amphitheatre of the struggle between the conservative and the reformist religious tendencies and movements. The conservative social groups strive to preserve old religious practices while the reformist social groups are characterizing those practices as irrational and mentally deadening. They counsel a rational approach to problems of life. A study of sacrifices becomes essential if one were to properly understand this struggle, particularly because they play a very significant role in the life of the rural people. The culture of the rural people is predominantly religious and sacrifices also form the theme of the rural folklore which constitutes the major part of their culture.

(c) *Rituals*. One of the significant features of the life of the rural people is its meticulous domination, even in details, by rituals. The conception of purity had been elaborated in the past Indian society to such an extent that it became a veritable principle. Rituals are the religious means by which the purity of the individual and the social life becomes guaranteed. The inherited rural religion prescribes a complex pattern of behaviour for the individual as well as for various social groups in all spheres of life, complex because rituals are associated with their numerous significant and even insignificant activities. Particular sets of rituals are dictated to a particular caste or sub-caste groups so much so that distinct differences in the respective rituals which those social groups and sub-groups follow enable one to distinguish them from one another. Social condemnation and even the threat of excommunication provide sanction for the strict enforcement of rituals among their members.

Rituals are associated with most of the life activities of the rural people. A ritual is prescribed whenever the individual or the social group initiates an activity even though the activity may be, like food-taking, repeated in future. Before an individual Brahmin starts consuming the food in the dish, he is required to draw a magic circle round the dish and apportion some grains of cooked rice to the god or gods. There are rituals prescribed for a number of such ordinary mundane and secular activities. There are the bath ritual, the occupational ritual, the ritual to be performed when a person occupies a

residential premises. There are separate rituals when the farmer begins sowing and harvesting. All landmarks in the process of agricultural production have been associated with specific rituals.

Rituals have been prescribed for auspicious days and also for the start of a new season. When a child for the first time goes to the school, there is also a ritual to be performed.

In fact, the life of the rural human is a succession of rituals corresponding to a succession of activities he is engaged in from morning to night, from month to month and year to year, almost from birth to death. Even the dead person is not to be left alone. Specific rituals have to be performed in the posthumous period for some days.

In fact, we may remark that it is very difficult to locate in the Hindu society where religious observances end and secular practices begin.

3. AS AN INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEX

The Hindu religion, which a preponderant section of the rural population subscribes to, is a conglomeration of numerous sub-religions and religious cults.

A number of these sub-religions and religious cults have been institutionalized. Corresponding to these institutionalized sub-religions and religious cults there exists a number of religious organizations.

Some of these religious organizations function on a national scale, some on the provincial and others on the local basis. They maintain Maths, Ashrams and temples where their adherents flock to worship and pray to various deities as also to listen to religious discourses.

These religious bodies own property, often substantial. They maintain a permanent staff of priests and preachers who spread the doctrines of their respective sub-religions and religious cults among the people.

Thus we have in the country such religious organizations as those headed by Shankaracharya, descendants of Ramanuj, Vallabha, Sahajanand and others, all differing again in subtle points of philosophy and rituals.

Some of the sub-religions and religious cults have not been institutionalized. Their protagonists and preachers have not been integrated into regular organizations.

The absence of state religions has been one striking characteristic of religion in India. This is in contrast to Christianity and Islam which became state religions in a number of countries of Europe and Asia. Religion in India was considered the concern of the community and not of the state. The religious organization was always distinct and separate from the state though a Hindu or a Muslim king might favour and support his respective religion.

In Europe, as history records, it was otherwise. There existed, in the Middle Ages, Catholic and subsequently Catholic and Protestant states. Till Kamal Pasha separated the state from religion Turkey was a theocratic Muslim state.

Hence we do not find in Indian history such struggles as that between the Pope, the head of the organized international Catholic religion, striving to maintain a system of Catholic states and Henry VII who rebelled against Catholicism and transformed the English state into a Protestant one.

One significant feature of the life of Indian society in the past lay in the fact that great democratic mass movements took the form of religious movements led by outstanding religious leaders popularly known as Bhaktas (Sants). Since religion was a community and not a state matter in India these movements were not directed against the state (in contrast to protestantism in Europe) but aimed at winning over the people to their programmes and, through their initiative and action, bring about the reform of society.

The popular democratic character of those Bhakti movements is evidenced by the fact that they generally stood for democratization of the Hindu society (liquidation of castes or caste inequalities) and for equal access to God and religious culture by all, including women, without the intermediary of the priestly brahmin caste. Further the Bhaktas developed the vernaculars or the languages which the common people knew and spoke and themselves created a vast literature in those languages. Thus they also brought culture to the common people.

It must, however, be noted that a Hindu, a Buddhist or a Muslim king would often utilise his state power and state resources for the extension of the particular religion he favoured.

We will next refer to the group of men exclusively devoted to religion. This group can be divided into two categories, priests who have a fixed domicile and *sanyasis* who travel from place to place.

There are various kinds of priests. There are family priests who serve the religious needs of the family; the caste and sub-caste priests who cater to the needs of various castes and sub-castes; and the village priest who looks after the village temple and meets the religious requirements of the village community as a whole.

These priestly groups exercise a powerful influence over the life of the rural people, both religious and secular, since secular life processes are coloured by religion and before being undertaken, require to be hallowed by religion through rituals. Religion is even now largely interwoven in the texture of the secular life of the rural people.

The historical tendency, however, is towards a decline of the domination of the secular life of the rural people by the priestly group.

There are, in our country, in addition to priests, a large number of roving religious men (*Sanyasis*) who mostly tour in the rural area. Some of them are preachers of the religious cults to which they belong. Others are just holy men who hallow the village by their visit and deign to taste the hospitality of the villagers for a while.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEMPLE IN RURAL AREA

We will next evaluate the role of the village temple in the life of the rural people. This is because the temple has not only functioned as a place of worship and prayer but also has served as the main centre and initiator of village activities. It plays a significant part in the village life even to-day.

The temple has been associated with education in the village. For ages it maintained a school where the village youngsters of higher caste received religious and secular education. It organized for the village people religious discourages as well as Kathas narrating the past history of the Indian people.

The temple did philanthropic and social welfare work in the village. It collected money and goods from the villagers with which it used to bring relief to the needy among them.

The temple organized collective social and religious functions.

portion of the collective life of the village, religious and secular, moved round the temple.

The temple also embodied and was the guardian of all traditional culture, literary and artistic. Sometimes it even attached to itself and maintained singers, dancers and musicians. It must be borne in mind that the past culture was largely religious and even its secular part was clothed in the religious raiment. Hence this inherited culture was associated with and guarded by the temple. Thus the village temple became the predominant centre of village culture; and the cultural life of the village, religious and secular, artistic and literary, moved round the temple.

The temple was the source of ethical values which regulated the life of the village people. The head of the village temple was the inexorable moral critic and controller of the actions of the villagers, though in recent times the control has been diminishing.

The temple played and also plays today an important role in the economic life of the village. All turning points in the process of agricultural production such as sowing, reaping, and others are signified by religious rituals. When an artisan starts his occupation, there is the inevitable ritual linked with the event. The temple through its priestly representative hallows the farmer's plough and the artisan's instruments, when they are first put to use, by means of appropriate religious rituals. Thus, the temple, the visible expression of the rural religion, plays an important role also in the economic life of the rural society.

The temple occasionally dispenses justice too. It adjudicates disputes between villagers with the authoritative voice of religion. It prescribes religious methods of expiation for even heinous secular offences.

Not only that. The temple further makes forecasts of future events through the priestly representative.

The temple serves as a social centre also. Even village gossip is largely carried on within the precincts or the periphery area of the temple.

Public meetings are generally held near or in the temple since it is the most significant and spacious place in the village.

The temple provided largely in the past and provides to a less extent now, teachers, physicians, medicine men, ethical leaders, songsters, experts in narrating past history before village audiences (*Kathakars*), scribes, astrologers, astronomers, and soothsayers to the village.

There is a rich variety of temples in the village. There are caste and sub-caste temples as well as temples consecrated to deities worshipped by the village people in common with the entire Hindu community as a whole. There are also temples for the worship of deities of specific religious cults like the Shakti cult and others. There are, further, temples where local village deities are enshrined.

Some of the village temples are owned publicly ; others are owned privately.

NEED TO STUDY RURAL RELIGION

The study of contemporary rural religion is very essential for having composite picture of the past cultural evolution of the Indian people. The history of Indian culture is still scrappy, is still in a fragmentary state. A controversy is still going on regarding the genesis of Indian culture and further phases of its subsequent development. Varied views have been advanced on the subject. Also problems such as, where the Indian culture originated and how it spread in different parts of India, also remain in the domain of debate.

NEED TO STUDY REGIONAL RURAL RELIGION

A study of various rural religions in various rural regions of India reveals certain common characteristics such as common patterns of gods and goddesses, common objects of worship, common rituals as well as almost common religious conceptions and myths. A number of these characteristics, however, exhibit regional variations.

Further, a regional rural religion also possesses features which are distinct and its own and which it does not share with others.

This discloses two striking facts. First, the common characteristics of these rural religions indicate that they had their origin in a common Indian culture in the past and, in spite of regional variations, constitute a varied pattern of a single Indian rural culture even today. Secondly, in spite of common ancestry they are also distinct rural religions of various rural areas since they possess certain independent traits and elements.

A careful sociological analysis of this rich diversity of contemporary regional rural religions will assist to trace their evolution. It will, further, help to discover the genesis of these rural religions which spread along with great and frequent migrations of peasant communities from one part of India to others.

Even the varied geographical conditions of India have played a big role in determining the Indian rural religion and its regional variations. Mighty rivers, mountainous territories, decisive trade routes, have influenced the character and content of those religions. The spread of modern railways, which have greatly neutralized the topographical and geographical factors in conditioning the cultural life of the people in modern times, makes it difficult for us to comprehend the significance of these factors in shaping the past Indian culture.

An inventory of the various religious beliefs, rituals and pantheons of gods and goddesses of various regional rural religions and a study of their common characteristics as well their regional variations will help to evolve a scientific history of the Indian rural culture as it developed and spread for many centuries.

The study of the Hindu rural religion is particularly fascinating because of the rich variety of its content. Hinduism is a colossal diversified complex of religious beliefs and rituals. In its contemporary form it is an aggregate of religious dogmas and practices almost of all phases of development of human society.

STUDY OF RURAL RELIGION, AID TO EVOLVING SCIENTIFIC INDIAN HISTORY

Further, a sociological investigation into Indian rural religion will disclose, though in symbolic form, the past social, political, economic and ethnic history of India. It will unveil the history of economic and other clashes as well as of various social, political and cultural amalgamations of conflicting social groups in the past.

This is because the shadow of world religion reflects the real movement of society.

The studies of Egypt, Babylonia, Greece and other countries by eminent scholars like Moret, Maspero, Breasted, Frankfort, Gordon Childe, Thomson and others have shown how a systematic study of the evolution of gods from tribal totems and fetishes to national pantheons unfolds the process of the transformation of tribal society into territorial political society. A study of the ideology and mythology of the rural religion in India may also unlock the secrets of changes in the Indian society in various stages of its evolution.

The rural sociologist in India has to study such problems as to why *Shaivism* spread in certain parts of India, how *Vaishnavism* spread in certain regions, why the *Shakti* cult took various forms in various zones, and others. Migrations of gods and goddesses signify the migrations of peoples too. Fusion of gods and goddesses reveals

the historical process of the fusion of peoples. The hierarchy of gods and goddesses and the branding of some deities as villainous and extolling of others as beneficent, unfold, though in mythological terms, struggles among ethnic groups and peoples and the subordination of some to others in real historical conflicts.

It must be noted that, in addition to Hinduism which we have extensively discussed on account of its preponderance, other religions like Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism also have existed in the Indian rural society. It is, therefore, also necessary for a rural sociologist to make their study on similar lines for a thorough assessment of the role of religion in the life of the rural people.

RURAL RELIGION UNDER THE IMPACT OF MODERN FORCES

Further, the study of the rural religion is also very vital because, due to the impact of modern economic, social, political and rationalist forces, the rural society is experiencing a transformation, however, slow, in the present period. The transformation is taking place in all spheres of rural life including the sphere of rural religion. The ideology, the institutions, the rituals, the ethics, and the aesthetics of the rural religion are undergoing a change, though gradual, under the pressure of new material and cultural forces. It is the task of the rural sociologist to study this process to be able to predict the future of the rural religion which exercises a great sway over the mind of the rural people and the life processes of the rural society.

CHAPTER XII

✓ RURAL EDUCATION

EDUCATION, ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN MODERN TIMES

The significance of education in modern societies cannot be over-estimated. A literature and educated people are a prerequisite both for maintaining and further developing these societies. The crucial need of education for the people in various spheres of modern social life (economic, political, social, ethical and others) has been unanimously recognized. We will see why this need arises.

1. ECONOMIC REASONS

In contrast to the multitude of self-sufficient village economies which mainly constituted the economic life of the pre-modern communities, the economy of a modern people has a national basis. Further even this national economy has been largely outmoded in recent decades and has become an integral part of the single world economy. The national economy, in fact, produces industrial, agrarian and other commodities both for the national and international markets. Consequently, it is the world price movement of various commodities which finally determines the volume and the price of products in different production centres. An intelligent and correct understanding of the complex economic life of mankind as a whole therefore becomes necessary for all producers.

It was not so in pre-modern societies. In pre-British India, as observed earlier, the village farmer group produced just enough to meet the requirements of the village population and of the land revenue to be paid by the village collectivity to the state. In post-British India the village farmer group has been producing for the local, national and even international market. If the village agriculturist is not to be a victim of the vicissitudes of the world market, he needs to be educated enough to follow the movement of national and world economies.

2. POLITICAL REASONS

✓ Education is necessary for the modern rural aggregate also for political and administrative reasons. Formerly, as mentioned before, the state exercised nominal sovereignty over the village. Its administrative machinery did not penetrate and function in the village. The village panchayat and caste committees regulated the life of the people. After the modern society evolved, the village has become

an integral part of the political and administrative machinery of a highly centralized state. Since the modern state appreciably shapes the economic, social, and cultural life of the people, it is indispensable for the rural people to study its mechanism. The rural man needs to know a minimum of law, governing judicial and administrative processes as well as powers of various state organs. Further, in recent decades, various political parties have sprung up in the rural area. These parties struggle among themselves to win the support of the rural people with a view to gain control over the state. It is, therefore, also necessary for the rural people to study the programmes and policies of these political parties. Both these reasons make it obligatory for them to have education./

3. SOCIAL REASONS

Education is essential for the rural people also for the broad social reason viz. that all social relations between citizens are, in the modern society, governed by the principle of contract and not by status as in the former epoch. Contractual social relations are complex and multifold demanding from the citizen an understanding of the basic structure of the modern society and hence this need for education. The economic relations between citizens, the relations between the members of the family and other types of social relations, which in their totality form the complex variegated pattern of the modern society, are governed by laws based on the principle of contract. Only an educated citizen can have a comprehension of such a diversified system of contractual relations.

4. ETHICAL REASONS

There is another reason why the rural man must be an educated man. In the modern society the ethical life of the individual as well as of the social aggregate is increasingly being based on secular and humanist instead of on religious principles as in the medieval society. Equality of all men, individual liberty, development of human personality, reason as the determinant of human conduct—such are some of the principal conceptions which have been progressively determining the behaviour of the individual and the social aggregate. Modern education is absolutely necessary to comprehend these basic conceptions.

5. CULTURAL REASONS

Education is also the prerequisite for the study and assimilation of the rich culture which has developed in the contemporary age. Human knowledge of the natural world has registered a phenomenal advance in modern times, giving man a greater mastery over nature.

Similarly knowledge in the sphere of social life too has immensely grown, thereby enabling man to mould his collective social life more consciously. Further, there has been a tremendous advance in the field of artistic culture also. A part of this rich modern culture has even acquired the character of a world culture. Education is indispensable for assimilating this mighty world culture so vital for enriching the intellectual and emotional life of the individual and thereby increasing his capacity to contribute to the advance of society. The best part of modern culture lays strong emphasis on individual liberty and social co-operation both of which are so essential for the development of the individual's personality and powers and for social progress. The citizen who imbibes such a culture will feel an inevitable urge to work for the creation of a society free from social antagonism and discord and based on social solidarity and individual freedom.

6. OTHER REASONS

For the agriculturist, education is, in addition, necessary for understanding of the advantages of the use of such advanced agricultural techniques as tractors, fertilizers, harvesters and thrashers.

It must be also noted that the modern society throws up specific problems which only modern knowledge can successfully solve. For instance, the economic or political science embodied in *Arthashastra* by Chanakya cannot aid in solving the economic and political problems emerging from the soil of contemporary society. And modern education is the only means to acquire modern knowledge.

Just as old knowledge cannot assist in solving modern problems, educational methods of gaining old knowledge cannot help to assimilate modern knowledge. Modern science of pedagogy, modern methods of instruction and modern schools are required for imparting modern knowledge.

A shockingly large portion of the Indian rural population is submerged in gross ignorance and illiteracy. The problem of transforming tens of millions of those illiterate rural humans into educated and well-informed citizens is a problem of herculean proportion and still has to be resolved if the Indian society is to advance materially and culturally.

EDUCATION IN PRE-BRITISH INDIA, ITS BASIC FEATURES

We will first delineate the main features of the education in the pre-British Indian rural society based on subsistence economy.

Education in the agricultural, industrial, and other occupational arts was imparted to the members of the growing young generation

not in schools but in the process of their direct empirical participation in those occupations under the guidance of family elders.

Social education or education in the arts of social behaviour and adaptations was imparted to them by the family and the caste as the social life of the village people mainly moved within the family and the caste matrix.

The growing young generation received its moral and intellectual education largely from the priests, the Kathakars and saints, and, also, to some extent, from the family.

The multitude of secular and religious functions, festivals and celebrations, which the family, the caste, and the village community organized and in which the youngsters of the village participated, served as the school for the aesthetic education of those youngsters.

The world outlook inculcated by that education was fundamentally religious. It propagated the concept of the divine origin of the world and of God's free will determining all phenomena and happenings. In addition to one supreme God it also taught the belief in a pantheon of Gods and spirits behind all phenomena, significant and insignificant. Eclipses and earthquakes, floods and epidemics, were not scientifically explained but were declared to be the result of the wrathful actions of malevolent gods and goddesses. For instance, the eclipse signified the temporary suppression of the Sun-God by the two demons, *Rahu* and *Ketu*. The earthquake was the consequence of the movement of Shesh Nag who supports the earth on its colossal hood. The eruption of small-pox was the result of the ire of the deity *BALIA KAKA* who, therefore, had to be propitiated by a proper ritual. Education, then, also encouraged belief in animism, in tree gods, mountain gods and river goddesses.

Thus the rural people of the pre-modern society had a religious unscientific conception of the world.

The history of the past Indian society taught to the young generation was largely mythology. It dealt with the superhuman feats of god-kings. Even gods participated in the terrestrial battles between these god-kings. Such a history could not give a consistent continuous account of the development of the social, economic and political life of the people in the past and explain all historical transformations by means of secular causes.

The social education adapted the individual to the exigencies of joint family, caste and village communal life. Since the social structure was authoritarian, the social education was authoritarian in spirit

too. It exhorted the individual to completely subordinate himself to the joint family, the caste or the village community. It disciplined him in the service of these institutions. Such a social education could hardly serve individual liberty or help the development of human personality.

All education including agricultural and craft education consisted of empirically acquired and hereditarily transmitted body of knowledge from the past. It was imparted to the young orally, mostly in the process of practice in arts, crafts and agriculture and participation in social life. There did not exist any technical institutes, musical and other art academies or schools of social sciences in the village. It was only in some distant urban centres that some educational and training institutions existed and functioned.

EDUCATION UNDER THE BRITISH RULE, ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS

Impact with the west in general and Britain in particular and the resultant rise of modern society in India led to the spread of modern education among our people.

The new education was essentially secular and, on the whole, liberal in spirit and content. This signified a shift from the religious and authoritarian to secular and liberal character of education. The spread of the modern education was, however, extremely slow and mainly restricted to middle and upper strata of the urban society. Very few villages had schools, and, even where they existed, the stark poverty of the rural people made it impossible for them to take advantage of the educational facility due to high cost. Further, since the modern education was introduced in India by the British mainly to meet the need of the personnel for their administrative machinery and economic enterprises, its liberal aims remained hazy or were even distorted. It did not set to itself the ideal of turning out citizens armed with modern knowledge who would use that knowledge for the untrammelled material and cultural advance of the nation to which they belonged. It was bereft of nationalist spirit and ideals. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that in spite of these serious flaws, the introduction of the new education brought the Indian people in contact with the liberal, democratic and rationalist ideologies of the modern west. Supersession of the pre-British education, authoritarian in spirit and largely superstitious in content, by the modern education, however defective, was an event of great significance in Indian history. Radhakrishnan's University Commission Report vividly depicts the achievements as well as the limitations of the system of modern education introduced during the British period.

As we have stated before, the benefits of the modern education hardly extended to the rural India. The problem of education in the

rural area was almost completely ignored by the British as is evidenced in the fact that, even after a hundred and fifty years of the British rule, 86% of the total Indian population, including its advanced urban section, still remained illiterate.

A number of agencies worked for the spread of the modern education in India. The British Government, various foreign missionary bodies, Indian social reform organizations and subsequently political institutions like the Indian National Congress, were the chief among these agencies.

All these agencies, however, failed to achieve any appreciable result in the rural area.

Even the problem of rural education, it must be said, was not thought out in all its complexity.

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

With the advent of national independence, the problem of rural education has assumed urgent importance and new significance. The free Indian people have set to themselves the task of building up of a democratic, progressive, national life, which surely cannot be achieved when tens of millions of rural people are illiterate, ignorant and superstitious.

Campaign against the mass illiteracy among the rural people is the urgent task to-day. Further, treasures of rich modern knowledge have to be brought within their reach if they are to be effective participants in the creative work of national reconstruction.

For successfully evolving a comprehensive and scientific programme of rural education a number of problems germane to it have to be resolved. We enumerate these problems below:

1. Objective of Education.
2. Structure of the Machinery of Education.
3. Technical and other Means for its Spread.
4. Finance and Personnel.

I OBJECTIVE OF EDUCATION

It is now recognized by eminent educationists that the present system of urban education lays unduly greater emphasis on the training of intellect than on the development of the physical, emotional, and moral aspects of the pupil's personality. Such education results

in the one-sided and therefore defective development of the young generation. It fails to evolve an integral human being with an all-sided development of his personality.

The present system of urban education is further criticized on the ground that, during the long period of schooling which extends from childhood to almost adulthood, the role of general knowledge is overemphasized. It is not related to concrete problems of real life. Consequently the educated youth, when he enters the arena of life after completing education, finds it difficult to grapple with the concrete problems of real life.

Various views have been advanced in the field of controversy over the question of education.

There are some who emphasize that education must have the liberal and humanist ideal before it. Others lay greater stress on the technical and practical aspects of education.

There are some who declare that the basic aim of education should be the development of the individual's personality. There are others who give greater importance to the cultivation of the virtues and qualities of an ideal citizen in the pupil.

There are some who desire secular education to be reinforced by religious training. There are others who sharply disagree with this view and uncompromisingly stand for purely secular education.

There is a group of educationists who are the exponents of a synthetic type of education which would help the development of all sides of the pupil's nature, intellectual, emotional, moral, and social, and help him to evolve into a synthetic man.

The view is gaining ground among a large number of social thinkers that the present education, which at the lower level, concentrates on the three R's, thereby concerns itself only with the development of the intellectual side of the pupil. They recommend that, instead of this, education should focus on three H's i.e. education of hand, heart and head. This will guarantee, they observe, the all-sided development of the pupil. Such education will result into the emergence of citizens, physically healthy and strong, emotionally rich, intellectually alert and capable of social co-operation. They will be valuable assets to the society.

The new Constitution of the Indian Union has stated in its preamble that it aims at creating a democratic society based on "justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; equality of status and opportunity." Fur-

ther it aims at promoting among all citizens "Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the Nation."

It implies the creation of a society free from all forms of inequalities and exploitation and based on individual liberty and social solidarity and co-operation.

For the realization of such an objective, it is necessary that the conception and the programme of education should be in harmony with and be derived out of it.

In his University Education Report, Dr. Radhakrishnan has given an elaborate picture of the social ideal depicted in the Constitution and has further described how it should be paraphrased and expressed in terms of the educational ideal of the nation.

Reconstruction of the Indian society as a whole in the spirit of the social ideal embodied in the Constitution would imply also the reconstruction of the Indian rural society in the spirit of the same ideal. Rural education should be therefore adapted to the needs of creation of the new and higher type of rural society envisaged in the future.

The study of a society reveals that the prevailing system of education serves the needs and ideals of that society. The educational system of a society based on self-sufficient economy serves the needs and ideals of that society. Similarly the present educational system subserves the requirements of the existing capitalist society based on a competitive and market economy and its social ideals.

A new educational system will have to be evolved if a new society based on co-operative socio-economic relations is to be created. It will have to instil virtues of social solidarity and social co-operation in the members of the young generation, uproot anti-social individualism, infuse social passions, and build up the ability for social co-operation among them.

The type of rural society which is programmed for construction should determine the educational system to be elaborated for the rural people.

The rural sociologist has to give the most earnest attention to this fact while making suggestions for a new system of education for the rural people.

2 STRUCTURE OF THE MACHINERY OF EDUCATION

The success of an educational scheme like that of all schemes depends upon the machinery evolved for implementing that scheme.

The scheme may be scientific and adapted realistically to social conditions and, further, the social ideal conceived by it may be noble, yet, if the appropriate machinery for its implementation is not forged, it will meet with failure.

The task of elaborating the organizational machinery for a scientific and comprehensive educational plan for millions of illiterate and ignorant villagers is a stupendous task. This is obvious when we consider that even the problem of creating a machinery for carrying out the minimum programme of the abolition of illiteracy among the rural people presents formidable obstacles.

The task raises a number of problems. What type of primary schools should be established for children? How will they be co-ordinated with such schools started for adult illiterates? In what manner will the primary schools be linked with secondary schools and the latter with higher educational institutions?

Further, should the schools in the rural area be open air or single room schools? Should they be specialized and differentiated or omnibus institutes? And, finally, how should the school time be adjusted to the exigencies of agricultural and artisan labour in which not only village adults but also youngsters participate?

The educational scheme will also raise such problems as those of the graded system of schools, suitable curricula to be evolved in the spirit of the social ideal in view, and the graded system of courses.

3 TECHNICAL AND OTHER MEANS FOR ITS SPREAD

During the last two hundred years, humanity has made amazing progress in the domain of technology. It has invented railways, steamships, aeroplanes, telephone and telegraph, radio, cinema and other marvellous technical devices. These devices constitute the valuable material means of integrating humanity into a single unit as well as of building up of a rich and unified economic and cultural life on a national and even international scale.

Formerly the school was practically the only effective lever of education. After those astonishing inventions, the school can be reinforced by other means also.

These modern means, it must be noted, have not yet been sufficiently utilised for educational and cultural purposes in our country.

We will enumerate below some of the principal among these means which, along with the school, are available for the rapid advance of education and cultural enlightenment of our people:

- (a) School.
- (b) Library.
- (c) Museum.
- (d) Movie.
- (e) Radio.
- (f) Mobile van.
- (g) Gymnasiums and Sports Centres.

A maximum and simultaneous utilization of these means will undoubtedly accelerate the process of extension of education and culture among the rural people.

We will refer very briefly to the specific role of these various means.

(a) *School*: The school should remain the principal lever of education. It can serve as the medium of formal education, patterned and planned.

(b) *Library*: The library adequately equipped with books scientifically dealing with varied subjects; with newspapers and magazines of local, national and even international significance; and with charts and maps; can be a rich reservoir of variegated knowledge, social, political, technical, economic and cultural. It can also enable the villager to follow decisive national and international happenings. The art section of the library can help him to develop a refined æsthetic sense and artistic taste. The library, when properly made use of, will help him to broaden his outlook, enlarge his vision, extend the frontier of his knowledge and to visualise local developments as an integral part of one single organic world development. He will thereby steadily build up a national and even international consciousness.

The library is particularly necessary in the village to-day, because, due to its absence, a large number of even those few, who have become literate through elementary village school education, cannot maintain their ability to read and hence lapse into illiteracy. As in the case of a bodily organ, a capacity atrophies when it is not continuously exercised.

The programme of providing the library to the rural area raises a number of problems. A veritable legion of them will be required for tens of thousands of villages in our country. Further, a good section of the village library should comprise literature adapted to the specific psychology, inferior cultural level, and requirements of life of the village people. The production of such literature will

itself present a task of stupendous proportion. The problem of fixing its content will bring headache even to expert educationists.

(c) *Museum*: The role of the museum as a source of knowledge is not often sufficiently realized even by the educated man. The various studies prepared by the League of Nations in the past vividly demonstrate the great significance of the museum in the educational programme for the rural people. Even a museum with a local scope has a great value for the enlightenment of the villager. It can bring him rich information about the geography, the geology and the topography of the local territory, its flora and fauna, racial stocks inhabiting it, its arts and crafts as well as its past embodied in historical records and relics. This would enable the villager to get a vivid composite picture of the life and culture of the local people of whom he is a part, in various stages of their development. It would thus help him to develop a historical sense and thereby recognize the causal connection between the past and the present. It would further deepen and vivify his imagination, enhance his sense of appreciation and strengthen his habit of observation. It would also deepen his interest in the social and natural worlds in which he lives. This would engender in him the urge to transform those worlds.

The museum will prove a valuable reinforcement to the school and library in the complex of means of disseminating education and culture among the rural people. It will not only improve the quality and quantity of education but will also, further, serve as a priceless additional source of material and factual data for preparing an authentic, multi-sided history of the people.

(d) *Movie*: It is very difficult to realize the hidden potentialities of the cinema, one of the most outstanding inventions of modern times, for creative social use. It can be a most powerful means of disseminating the modern protean culture among the people on a mass scale. It can be a classic weapon of mass education. It is one of the most effective means precisely because it enables hundreds of persons simultaneously to imbibe education and culture visually. In minimum of time the cinema can transmit maximum of instruction and cultural information. Further, since it operates through a succession of visual images interpreted through words, it accentuates interest in the educational and cultural content of those images. It is, in addition, the most economical method of spreading knowledge because it does not involve the necessity of engaging a large personnel of instructors.

This marvellous instrument has not still been utilized for mass education in India. It should be adopted as rapidly as possible as a means for educating the rural population in the briefest possible

time and also for making accessible to them the immense wealth of contemporary artistic and intellectual culture.

(e) *Radio* : Radio is another remarkable invention which, too, can reinforce the school as an auxiliary means of the education of the rural people. Ideally, each village should be equipped with a radio in the central place. Songs of great artists relayed by the radio will not only have recreational and emotionally nourishing value for the villager but will also develop his aesthetic faculty. Radio will further keep him acquainted with day to day events, both national and international. Further, talks given on radio on various themes by eminent experts and specialists will bring valuable knowledge to the village people.

(f) *Mobile Van* : Mobile vans, equipped with loudspeakers, radio, films, libraries and cultural objects, will greatly accelerate the spread of knowledge among the rural population. They can travel from village to village and bring enlightenment at the very door of the rural people. This would draw even its inert section, which lacks sufficient enthusiasm to visit schools or libraries into the orbit of modern culture.

(g) *Gymnasiums and Sport Centres* : The role of gymnasiums and sport centres as valuable means of physical culture and recreation should not be underestimated. They help to build up a physically sturdy and vivacious rural people. Further, by drawing the people in the sphere of vital and pleasant collective activities, they develop such qualities as social solidarity, co-operative habits, and social discipline among them. This is recognized by educationist and sociologists all over the world. The technique both of physical culture and sport has appreciably grown in quantity and quality in modern times due to the great advance of general technique. The modern gymnasiums are equipped with more complex and varied instruments than those of the previous societies. In the world of sport too, new games like cricket, lawn and table tennis, badminton, hockey and others have been added to the old ones.

Further, in former times, gymnastics and sports were isolated local activities only. In contrast to this, in modern times they have acquired a national and even international scope as is proved by national and international contests which are organized to-day. Not only are modern games and sports more specialized, differentiated and consciously planned but they have also become a permanent feature of the life of the society. This is unlike in former times when games and sports were only episodic phenomena mainly associated as subsidiaries with important social and religious functions.

It must, however, be noted that modern games, which have been practically transplanted from the West, have not still penetrated the rural area. This is primarily due to their expensive character.

Indigenous games and gymnastics bequeathed from pre-modern India still exist in the rural area.

One of the tasks confronting the rural educationist is to evolve a synthetic physical and sport culture which would be a creative amalgam of the best elements of premodern and modern physical and sport cultures.

The establishment of gymnasiums and sport centres, conceived in the spirit of such a scheme of synthetic physical and sport culture, in villages should be a part of the educational programme for the rural people.

This in brief is a survey of the role of various means, available in the modern age, for carrying out a comprehensive scheme of education and culture for the rural people. The problem is complex and the task colossal. However, the solution of this problem is vitally necessary for evolving a generation of sturdy people equipped with modern knowledge who alone can be the architect of a rural society based upon democratic and co-operative socio-economic relations and pulsating with rich cultural life.

For accomplishing this signal task it is necessary to abandon not only the old conception of rural education but also of the machinery to spread it. It is not only necessary to create schools and libraries in the rural area but also to establish museums, cinemas exhibiting educational films, radio sets relaying topical news and gymnasiums and sport centres, and, further, to organize a numerous fleet of mobile vans equipped with libraries, films and loudspeakers constantly engaged in their peripatetic educational and cultural campaign.

4. FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

The principal prerequisites for a successful fulfilment of the programme of rural education and culture outlined before are first, the mobilization of the necessary finances and secondly, the creation of the personnel to man the gigantic venture.

The financial resources at the disposal of a nation for implementing progressive plans in various spheres of life, in final analysis, depend on the productive power of the social economy which, in its turn, is determined by the natural resources of the country, the technique of production in industry and agriculture, and above all,

by the character of the social economy within which the production process is carried on. The extant social economy may help or hinder the free and rapid development of the productive forces of a society. The rural sociologist has, therefore, to be interested in the economic system prevailing in a country, study it, and decide whether it requires to be modified or even overhauled in the interests of the economic advance of the people and the resultant expansion of their material wealth. Only then the community can set apart finance requisite for the realization of comprehensive reform or reconstruction programmes including that of the rural education. Material prosperity and social and cultural advance of a people are indissolubly bound up. Culture is the spiritual perfume of the social economy.

The problem of teaching and directing personnel is another baffling problem. An enormous number of cadres of instructors, who have imbibed modern culture and who are, further, fired with social passion, will be needed for fulfilling the comprehensive educational plan.

RURAL EDUCATION, A HERCULEAN TASK

Only when all the abovementioned factors—a comprehensive scientific educational and cultural plan, a properly elaborated organizational machinery, various modern technical devices, a large personnel trained in modern knowledge and, finally, adequate financial resources—are created, it is possible to liquidate illiteracy among the rural people and also to bring treasures of modern knowledge and culture to them.

The problem of the rural education—its scope, methods, means, agencies, finances and personnel—is one of the most vital problems confronting the student of rural society in India.

CHAPTER XIII

AESTHETIC CULTURE OF THE RURAL PEOPLE

AESTHETIC CULTURE, ITS CHIEF INGREDIENTS

Aesthetic culture is an integral part of the total culture of a society. It expresses, in art terms, the ideals, the aspirations, the dreams, the values, and the attitudes of its people, just as its intellectual culture reveals its knowledge of the natural and social worlds which surround them.

A systematic study of the æsthetic culture of the Indian rural society, in its historical movement of the dissolution of old types and the emergence of new ones, is vital for the study of the changing pattern of the cultural life of the rural people. Further, since art reflects social life and its changes, such a study will help the rural sociologist to comprehend the movement of the rural society itself as it progressed from its past shape to its present one. It will also reveal the changes in the psychological structures of the rural people and its sub-groups.

Eminent sociologists have enumerated the following principal arts comprising the æsthetic culture of rural society :

- (1) Graphic Arts such as Drawing, Painting, Engraving and others which have two dimensional forms.
- (2) Plastic Arts which “involve the manipulations of materials to yield three dimensional forms—that is to say—carving and modelling in high and low relief and in the round.”
- (3) Folklore comprised of “myths, tales, proverbs, riddles, verse together with music.”
- (4) Dance and drama which combine the three forms mentioned above and therefore are “synthetic” arts.

ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS IN SUBSISTENCE SOCIETIES

Outstanding rural sociologists like Herskovief, Sorokin, Zimmerman, Galpin, and others have also located a number of specific characteristics of the æsthetic culture of the rural people living in society based on subsistence economy. The following are the important among them :

(1) *Art was fused with life*

As Sorokin remarks, "The arts were not sharply differentiated from religion, magic, intellectual pursuits, and other activities. Aesthetic elements penetrated to practically all daily occupations including agricultural work and they were an inseparable part of religious and other cultural activities."¹

(2) *The people as a whole took part in artistic activities*

This is in contrast to the situation in the present society where the people are divided into artists who perform art and the audience which enjoys it. This antithesis was not known to earlier society.

A social group, a family, or the village people as a whole, did not break itself into actors and spectators when they engaged themselves in artistic activity. Men, women, and children of the group, all participated in it; "they were both the actors and the audience." There were very few professional artists in that society. In the social division of labour artistic work was not still separated from the total social work so as to create a special body of social workers like artists.

(3) *Art was predominantly familistic*

As seen in the previous chapters, in the pre-modern society, the life of the rural aggregate had familistic character. Consequently, the rural art, which was fused with the life of the rural people, also bore the impress of familism. "The significance, the manifestations, the content and the symbolism of rural aesthetic activities were permeated with familism. Births, marriages, deaths and sickness of members of the family were the main subjects of rural art."²

(4) *The technique of art was simple.*

This was due to comparatively low level of general technique of the period, on which the technique of art depends.

The instruments of rural art were the products of the village artisan industry. Often the family itself made some of these in the home.

This is in contrast to the instruments of modern art which are the products of modern industries and are therefore complex, highly specialised, varied and multifold.

¹Systematic Sourcebook in Rural Sociology; Vol. II, p. 445.

²*Ibid.*, p. 446.

A simple drum (*DHOL*, *NAGARA*, *DHOLAK*, *DUFF*, *KHANJRI*, *NOBAT*); a flute made out of simple reeds or handy wood; a few stringed instruments not complicated in structure (*Ektar*, *Ravanhatha*); some metal instruments of simple design like gongs, bells, *MANJIRAS*; some wooden instruments like *KARTAL*; ordinary metal vessels of domestic use like *THALI*, *GAGAR*, *LOTA* or drinking pot, tongs; such natural objects as branches of trees, feathers of birds, shells, conches;—these constituted the technical prerequisites of art in the pre-modern Indian rural society. Further, art performances were organized not in theatres and concert halls, as in modern times but either in domestic premises or in open village spaces. The village drama was enacted not on any imposing stage equipped with colourful curtains, spotlights, and rich scenery in the background. Much of the realism was achieved not by suggestive or symbolic artifice but was created by histrionics.

(5) *Art had agrarian life processes as its main content.*

Since art was fused with life, it depicted the life of the rural people in its various aspects, economic, social and religious. For instance, "The most common of the work songs of non-urbanized agricultural peoples were those that accompanied collective agricultural occupations, hunting and fishing, grain-grinding and milling, flax-thrashing, corn-thrashing, ploughing and seeding, fruit-picking and so forth.... Some of their religious and magical songs were concerned with love, death, mourning, health and fertility, others dealt with agricultural activities and were sung as a part of the religious and magical rites connected with spring, summer, fall and winter festivities, still others honoured the grove, wood, field and corn deities.... Both work songs and religious songs were inseparably connected with daily life and with the religion and magic that centered in agriculture."³

Even a cursory survey of the songs of the Indian rural people corroborates the above view. Agricultural work processes like sowing, reaping, and harvesting; or other work processes like the fetching of water from the well by women; or sentiments of gratitude to gods for successful agricultural operations or plaintive appeal to them for their fruition; form the main thematic content of those songs.

Dance, another form of art, had also, for its predominant content the real agrarian life processes. Similarly, the folklore composed of legends, myths and stories, mostly dealt with the same theme either in a direct or symbolic form.

Ornamental and decorative rural arts also bore the impress of the rural environmental and social milieu. The specific flora and

³*Ibid.*, p. 451.

fauna found in the rural area provided material for design. Rural artistic creations in these and other spheres "are based on rural environment and occupation; trees, flowers and plants, horses, cattle and other animals, birds and fish and peasant houses."⁴ Further, geometrical designs characterizing those arts had a magical meaning bearing on various agrarian life processes.

The rural sociologists have also observed that "Agricultural characteristics are most clearly manifest in songs, music, dances, stories, proverbs, riddles, literature, pantomimes, festivals, dramatic performances and similar forms of the arts; they are less conspicuous in designs, ornamentations, architecture and sculpture, but even here if properly interpreted, the agricultural stamp is noticeable."⁵

(6) *Art creations were predominantly collective creations, collective in spirit.*

This is one of the most striking features of the rural art. While in the urban area, songs, stories dramas, and such other art pieces, have been the products of individual artists, practically the entire folklore of the rural people, comprising rural songs and tales as well as rural dramas, has been the collective creation of generations of rural artists. Their authorship cannot be traced to individual artists since no individual artists created them. They remain, therefore, almost always anonymous in origin.

As a result of this, the rural art has been overwhelmingly collective in spirit. It has expressed the fears, joys, aspirations, and dreams of the collectivity even more than most of the social art of the urban society. Further, it has been marked with profound natural-dreams of the collectivity even more than most of social art of the urban society. Further, it has been marked with profound naturalness, sincerity, and spontaneity. This is in contrast to the urban art which is either commercialized and, therefore, caters largely to the emotions of its potential buyers or is super-individualistic (ivory tower art) and embodies the individualistic caprices and momentary emotions of the artist. Further, rural art has expressed the sentiments and life experiences of countless generations. It has been, therefore, also more organic and durable than most of the urban art.

(7) *Rural art was non-commercial*

In agrarian societies based on self-sufficient economies, products have not the character of commodities. Thinkers and artists create

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 453.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 451.

their intellectual and artistic products not for the market but for the direct consumption of the village rural aggregate that looks after their needs. Rural art, hence, is not commercialized. Since the rural artist is not motivated by the urge to make profit through his art creations, his artistic activity is urged on only by the artistic aim. The urban artist, in contrast to this, is torn between two urges; one, the urge for artistic self-expression and the other, the need to make livelihood in a competitive economic environs by producing for the market and hence by adapting his art to the tastes of those who can buy it. This dualism disrupts his artistic personality and tends to distort his art. The rural artist does not suffer from these contradictory motives and his art is, therefore, "harmonious."

Here we must strictly guard ourselves against the danger of idealizing rural art and the self-sufficient society which generates that art. In such a society, the individual is not still differentiated from the collectivity, be it the joint family, the caste, or the village community. The individual is subordinated to these groups. The structure and environment of such a society do not, therefore, provide freedom for the development of the creative individuality of its members or scope for them to strike out new unconventional paths of thought and craftsmanship. This puts a limitation on the rural art though its collective spirit should be properly noted and valued.

The competitive socio-economic environs of the modern society, on the other hand, while differentiating and liberating the individual from the pressure of the collectivity on his free development, tends to weaken his social urges. Most of the urban art is, therefore, individualistic. It mostly portrays the struggles of the individual against the stifling forces of the unplanned competitive society. Excepting for a growing minority art current, which mirrors the dream of, and struggle for a higher co-operative society, the existing urban art is, largely, socially sterile, morbid or escapist.

(8) *Artistic craftsmanship and culture were transmitted from generation to generation orally.*

This was due to the fact that there existed no printing press which would produce literature on art. Further, there did not exist any schools or academies of art in self-sufficient societies. Hence, they were mainly the family elders who trained the youngsters in the knowledge and execution of arts like folk songs, folk dances and others.

We have referred elsewhere to the process of the transformation of the old rural society into the new modern society.

TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL AESTHETIC CULTURE

We will briefly summarize the most striking features of this transformation in the sphere of rural aesthetic culture. Art gradually became a specialized activity of the artist. The village population increasingly became differentiated into artists and the rest. Individual artist or a group of artists sang and danced on festive occasions, the rest of the village people constituting the audience. The technique of art also slowly altered, became more complex thanks to the ability of modern industry to produce complex art instruments. Above all, since commodity production extended to the village also, art itself became a commodity and the artist, a seller of the artistic goods. Pecuniary gain became the main motif of artistic creation.

Art, moreover, became gradually separated from life. Its thematic content changed. It began to draw its themes and imagery from new sources such as the travails of the individual struggling against the pressures of a competitive socio-economic environment. Formerly, it dealt with the vicissitudes of the life of the village collectivity; now it concerned itself with the fate of the individual. Thus art increasingly ceased to be a collective activity of the village group as a whole dealing with its collective life processes and became the individual activity of the artist dealing with the problems of the individual struggling in a competitive world. Further, the traditional practice of handing down art from generation to generation began to decline also since the printing press made it possible to perpetuate art techniques and art creations like folk songs and village tales in the printed form.

The modern cinema with its film songs and film stories, the gramophone with its song records, together with the radio, slowly began to penetrate the rural zone and became new means of aesthetic delight for the rural population.

These developments led to the increasing urbanization of the rural aesthetic culture. Thus under the impact of the technical and economic forces of modern society, not only did the socio-economic structure of the rural society undergo a signal transformation but its aesthetic culture with its specific characteristics also suffered an increasing change.

The Indian rural society, for the last one hundred and fifty years, has been experiencing a historical change. The change has not, however, advanced to the same extent as in some other countries since a foreign power which ruled India during this period retarded the process of rapid industrialization and resultant modernization of our country. In West European countries and the U.S.A. the urbanization of the old rural society and its aesthetic culture have advanced

to a far greater degree than in India. It must, however, be noted that even in those advanced countries the aesthetic culture of the rural society possesses a number of specific characteristics which distinguish it from the aesthetic culture of the urban society.

It is essential for the Indian rural sociologist to study the aesthetic culture of the contemporary rural Indian people and the transformation it is undergoing. Such a study will enable him to comprehend the transformation of the life of the rural people and their struggles, dreams and aspirations. Art reveals life through more subtle nuances and often provides a more authentic picture of life than what even history books can give. The French society of Balzac's period is more vividly and truthfully laid bare when viewed through the prism of his great realistic novels than as revealed by the French historians in their works.

As Mr. Morris observes:

"To a superlative degree the arts express the qualities which an age prizes, the human actions which it cherishes, and the ideals which it ennobles....In the aesthetic attitude, a culture can be captured and held, not as a set of bare facts to be statistically tabulated, but as a function of the travail of human minds."

The aesthetic culture of the rural people should be next studied from the standpoint of (1) its content and (2) its form.

CONTENT OF RURAL AESTHETIC CULTURE

The rural aesthetic culture, a rich complex of myths, legends, folk songs, folk tales, riddles and proverbs, dances, dramas and pantomimes, and graphic and plastic arts, transmitted from generation to generation, embodies directly or symbolically the world outlook, social conceptions and ethical norms of the rural people as they emerged and changed across ages. It can serve as a very valuable source material for a rural sociologist of imagination and insight to build up a concrete vivid picture of the technical, economic, social, religious, moral and cultural life of the rural aggregate in various periods. Since the rural aesthetic culture was always anchored in the life of the rural people, was fused with it and, further, artistically mirrored it, it would reveal what technique they employed in material production in a particular period, what weapons they used in warfare, what ornaments and costumes they wore, what houses they built and lived in, what socio-economic system prevailed during that period, what social classes comprised it, what social conflicts rent it, what type of family and other social institutions then existed, what customs ruled the people, what views and attitudes they held on diverse problems, what norms and criteria determined their social conduct.

It will thus not only lay bare the social structure and life of the people in a past period but will also disclose their social, ethical and religious conceptions as well as their material and ideal aspirations and aims. It will also reveal the story of their brave social endeavour, also of their reverses and victories.

The enormous rich material comprising the rural aesthetic culture has to be first assembled, analysed and classified. The next task for the rural sociologist is to interpret it with deep historical imagination and sociological insight. This alone will help him to achieve a living objective picture of the rural society and the rural life as they existed in the past. This is specially necessary because no detailed written history is available.

The Indian rural society is divided into a number of regional rural societies.

A comparative study of the contents of the aesthetic cultures of these units will disclose elements common to them such as a number of common folk songs, folk tales, myths, proverbs, riddles and others, though generally to be found with regional variations.

Such a discovery will help to comprehend the process of the diffusion of culture which had taken place in various rural zones of India in the past. It will also help to get an adequate picture of the historical process of the contacts and collisions, amalgamation or even assimilation, among numerous tribes and communities which lived in India in past epoches. A veritable past history of the Indian rural society and the Indian rural humanity can be composed through such a comparative study of the various rural aesthetic cultures of the various rural zones today.

Such a history of the Indian rural society is indispensable for evolving the history of the Indian society as a whole.

There are various means of deciphering the past history of the Indian people. The study of the variegated and massive content of the aesthetic cultures of the regional agrarian groups and its evaluation will serve as perhaps one of its most fruitful means for that purpose. Nevertheless, all the varied means should be utilised in mutual co-ordination.

FORM OF RURAL AESTHETIC CULTURE

After studying the content of the rural aesthetic culture, it is necessary to study the specific forms in which this culture is expressed.

There exists an organic relationship between the content and the form of art. It consists in the unity of its form and content, the content determining the form.

The specific content of the rural aesthetic culture outlined previously determines the specific forms of that culture. It determines the styles of painting, engraving, sculpture and architecture; the designs of costumes and ornaments; the tunes of folk songs and the rhythms of folk poetry; the structures of folk tales, dances and dramas. Further, a good proportion of that culture is marked with symbolism and it is the task of the rural sociologist to penetrate through the symbols and uncover the hidden significant ideas conveyed in an art work.

The Indian rural aesthetic culture comprising various regional rural cultures exhibits a variety of styles, patterns and modes. For instance, we have such varied forms as Sorathas, Dohas, Chaupais, and Chhappas, Kirtans, Bhajans, Abhangas, Pavadas, Deshis, Horis, Kajaris, Kawalis and others in the domain of poetry and song; Rasas, Garbas and others in the sphere of dance; and Bhavais, Ramililas, Tamasas and others in the field of drama. Similarly the worlds of other rural arts also reveal a rich diversity of forms.

The study of different forms of the art cultures of different regional rural communities will help us to distinguish them as distinct cultural units. Further, since the agrarian life possesses certain common characteristics, though with local and regional variations, such a study will also reveal how basically the same life content has been variously handled in the sphere of art by different agrarian communities.

A considerable amount of specialization is found in the agrarian arts mainly because the art is fused with concrete activities like sowing, reaping, harvesting and others or with such articles of utility as ornaments and earthenware. Again, since the art creations maintain a thematic continuity, the arts dealing with them are enriched from generation to generation. There is thus continuous improvement of agrarian arts, their forms, styles and patterns.

A study of the forms of various regional aesthetic cultures discloses the significant fact that a number of them are essentially the same with regional variations only. This would assist the rural sociologist to resolve the problem of the diffusion of art forms, and of the migrations of a number of rural arts.

The Indian rural people have a long and rich history of aesthetic culture. Musical concerts and dramas were a feature of the rural life during the Maurya period and have been, as A. S. Altekar states,

described as "Preksha," by Charakya and "Samaja" by Ashoka. They were an integral part of the celebrations of religious festivals such as Ram-Navmi, Gokul-Ashtami, Dasera, Ganesh Chaturthi, and Holi. They were also organised at village and inter-village fairs which were great social occasions in pre-modern times.

TRENDS OF THE CHANGES IN AESTHETIC CULTURE

Since the advent of the British in India, as previously seen, a process of the fundamental alteration of Indian society began. As a result of this the psychology of the rural people also changed. The old aesthetic culture began to decline. The process is still continuing. The old arts have been gradually declining though the new modern ones have not been replacing them with the same tempo.

The rural sociologist is confronted with the problem of a renaissance of the rural aesthetic culture. He has to resolve a number of problems germane to a programme of such a renaissance. What will be the nature of the new aesthetic culture? What will be its content and form? Will the new rural arts be fused with the new rural life? Will the organic unity of art and life, the basic characteristic of the old aesthetic culture, be preserved in the new art? Will the new rural art retain the sincerity and the spontaneity of the old one or will it be sophisticated as a good section of the modern urban art is? What will be the ideology informing it? Will it be a mass art in which the people participate or will it be a distinct domain of the professional artists? Will it be a commercialized art produced by artists who subordinate their self-expression to the needs of the market or an ivory tower art where the artists create solely for their own satisfaction, or an art which is social and still provides free self-expression for the artists? These are some of the vital problems which the rural sociologist has to investigate.

Further, modern humanity has at its disposal an advanced technology which can create a complex and multifold technique of art. The material means and resources available today for such arts as painting, music, drama, architecture and others are simply astounding. They can serve as the material prerequisite for the creation of a rich and variegated artistic mass culture which can express profound social ideas and portray individual and mass emotions in all their complexity and variety. The new art by means of the material technique accessible to it can work up not merely a few simple collective ideas and emotions as the old rural art did, but also the multifold and complex collective as well as individualized ideas and emotions which the modern rural humanity even today conceives and feels under the impact of a changing agrarian world. With the steady transformation of the rural society, the social relations are being constantly

recast engendering new conceptions and feelings, new social passions, dreams and aspirations.

The existing rural aesthetic culture is in a state of increasing disorganization. This, in the final analysis, is the result of the increasing disorganization of the rural society itself of which it is the aesthetic reflex. The crisis of culture is the product of the crisis of society.

The problem arises whether the process of increasing disorganization and dissolution which the present rural aesthetic culture is undergoing will culminate into the emergence of a new historically higher aesthetic culture.

It depends on how the crisis of the present rural society is resolved. If the present rural society is replaced by one materially and culturally more advanced and based on co-operative social relations, a higher aesthetic culture will spring as a beautiful flower on the tree of such a higher type of society.

As mentioned before, the rural aesthetic culture has been declining and some of the rural arts even disappearing. From the standpoint of the history of the evolution of the Indian art, it is necessary to preserve the knowledge of the present rural aesthetic culture. Further, this is also necessary because, in absence of the written history of the early phases of the Indian society and insufficiently recorded history of subsequent phase, the rural aesthetic culture with its myths and legends, folk tales and folk songs, dances and dramas, paintings, engravings and statues, can provide a clue to the life of the Indian people in past epochs.

Modern technical means such as printing press, gramophone, camera, film and others can be made use of for preserving the rural songs and stories, statuary and architecture, fables and legends, through printing, recording and photographing.

For all these reasons a careful study of the rural aesthetic culture is indispensable for the student of the rural society.

CHAPTER XIV

CHANGING RURAL WORLD

RURAL SOCIETY, CHANGING

Like all other phenomena the rural society too has been changing since its emergence. Its technology, economy and social institutions, its ideology, art and religion, have undergone a ceaseless change. This change has sometimes been imperceptibly slow, sometimes strikingly rapid, and at some moments even qualitative in character resulting into the transformation of one type of rural society into another type.

To discern change in a system, to recognize its direction, to understand the objective and subjective forces which bring it about and, further, to consciously accelerate the process of change by helping the progressive trends within the changing system—this constitutes a scientific approach to and active creative intervention in the life of a system.

RURAL CHANGE, FACTORS RESPONSIBLE

We will now refer to the forces and factors, conscious or unconscious, which bring about change in rural society.

Close investigators of rural society have enumerated a number of these forces and factors, the following being the principal among them.

NATURAL FACTORS

Natural forces such as floods, earthquakes, famines and others affect the territorial zone in which the rural people live. They have a disastrous effect on the flora and the fauna of the zone which often considerably influences the economic life of the people, and, in the case of earthquakes of dangerous intensity, even sometimes results in large-scale loss of human life and material devastation. The rural collectivity lives in the midst of a specific geographical and geological milieu and manipulates them through agriculture, mining and other operations. Hence a profound change in earth structures modifies or sometimes even convulses its life processes.

These are the natural forces which bring about change in rural society.

There are human factors, too, which operate to alter that society.

TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

As observed earlier, man carries on his struggle against the environment by means of tools. He has, therefore, been ceaselessly engaged in improving the old tools and inventing new ones. Though the inventors create new tools consciously, they are unable to prognosticate the social consequences of their inventions which are sometimes far-reaching. The invention of new tools, new means of transport and communications, and the discovery of new materials such as iron, new chemical substances and others, result in the change in the life of the rural people, in their economy and even in the structures of their social and political relations. The far-reaching economic, social and political outcomes of outstanding inventions like the plough, the steam engine and others, were not and could not be predicted by their inventors.

As Prof. Ogburn observes, the invention of radio led to about 150 major changes in social life.

The invention of steam-driven machinery in England resulted in the evolution of modern industries, which, at a certain stage of their development, needed foreign market. This led to the political and the economic expansion of Britain and the rise and growth of the British Empire. Once the power-driven technique was invented, it was adopted by other nations also. Western nations, in steady succession, developed modern industries and, due to the need of foreign market for their industrial products, conquered other countries and built up empires. This changed the economic and political life of those nations as well as of those who were subjected to them. The societies of the countries of both the dominant as well as the subject nations were either completely transformed or appreciably modified.

What is true of the national societies is also true of the rural society since it is an integral part of the national society.

VARIOUS CONSCIOUS METHODS

Next we will survey the methods and devices adopted by social groups and organizations to consciously bring about the alteration or transformation of the rural world.

Eminent sociologists like Sims and others have collected and mentioned various techniques and methods used by these groups and organizations. The following are the chief among them:

(1) *Persuasive Method*

The protagonists of this method seek to convince the rural population of the necessity of effecting changes in the rural society in

various spheres, technical, economic, social and others, through organized propaganda campaign. They endeavour to popularise among them various rural reforms or rural reconstruction programmes and exhort them to implement these programmes.

The distinguishing characteristic of this method lies in the fact that its proponents restrict their effort only to the propaganda of their programmes. They do not themselves initiate or participate in implementing the programmes. They leave this to the rural people themselves.

This is because the exponents of this method have almost limitless faith in the force of argument. They hold the view that it is possible by means of a suitable argument to convince the rural people of the need for change in the rural social structure, to kindle in them the urge for such a change, to popularise among them an appropriate programme of rural reform or reconstruction and, through this, to rouse them to practical activity for the accomplishment of that programme.

(2) *Demonstrative Method*

This method is also known as the method of propaganda through example or by deed. The exponents of this method endeavour to popularise their programme of rural reconstruction or specific reform by themselves implementing it on a miniature scale. They declare that the rural population would be more easily convinced of the advantages of a programme of rural change if the advantages of such a programme are demonstrated in action. They consider this method more effective than that of mere oral and written propaganda.

For instance, they organize demonstration farms to convince the farmers of the superiority of a new technique and new and better methods of agricultural production. They start model agricultural colonies based on the co-operative principle to rouse the farmers to the recognition of the economic advantages of co-operative farming so that they themselves, on their own initiative, may combine or integrate their individual uneconomic or semi-economic holdings and embark on the road to co-operative or collective agriculture. They establish a few educational and health centres so that the rural population may recognize the benefits of education and hygiene and, thereafter, themselves start schools and health centres in the entire rural area.

(3) "*Compulsory*" Method

The state itself often intervenes and, through legislation, brings about changes in the rural life or the rural social structure. It is not the will and the initiative of the rural people but of the state that

determine and accomplish those changes. During the War, "To rural America, along with the rest, coercive measures were applied. Among other things, production was made compulsory, prices were fixed, the disposal of food stuffs prescribed and time of labour regulated by law."

In India, a number of states have recently enacted anti-zamindari laws to alter land relations in the rural areas.

"Such "compulsory" intervention of the state in the life of the rural people has been increasing in modern times.

(4) *Method of Social Pressure*

This method is adopted by a rural individual, a group or a class to achieve a desired change in the life of the rural people or in the rural social or economic structure. The means resorted to may vary widely. They may include petitioning, passive resistance, individual and group satyagraha, processions and marches, strikes and demonstrations, even individual terrorism (for instance killing of money-lenders or landlords by farmers or tenants), mass revolts, revolutions and others.

These forms of pressure and struggle have been growing more and more prevalent in modern times.

The rural sociologist has to carefully analyse and study these forms of struggle since they have been playing a significant role in transforming rural societies of various countries in the contemporary epoch.

(5) *Contact Method*

"It is generally recognized that one of the most effective means of social change is found in contact of cultures... where peoples of different cultures come in touch with one another, cross-fertilization takes place."

In the medieval age, the town and the village lived almost independent social, economic and cultural existence. This separatism was increasingly undermined as a result of the extension and wider and wider ramification of modern means of transport and communication all over the country and resultant closer and closer contact of urban and rural populations. Further, the village economy was transformed and became an integral part of the national and even international economy. This created and multiplied the points of contact between the rural and urban societies and their populations. This increasingly led to the changes in the socio-economic structure of the rural society and the life of the rural people.

The historical tendency is towards a growing urbanization of the rural society due to the stronger impact of the urban forces on the latter.

(6) *Educational Method*

The increasing spread of modern education among the rural people through the establishment of schools and other educational institutions has been one of the very effective means to bring about changes in the rural life and the rural social structure. The village people, when they are initiated in scientific knowledge of life and the world, would find it easy to break with superstition which affects their consciousness and keep them conservative.

A group of social thinkers invest the educational method with decisive importance in bringing about the rural change.

CONCLUSION

We have referred above to some of the principal methods observed by some of the eminent rural sociologists, which have been operating to bring about the rural change.

These methods should be carefully studied by those who desire to evolve a programme of rural reform or reconstruction. They should assess the value of these methods and assign them a proportional significance while elaborating such a programme.

CHAPTER XV

RURAL SOCIOLOGY, A GUIDE TO RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

THREE SCHOOLS OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

There are numerous individuals and groups who desire and strive for the improvement of the material and cultural life of the rural people.

They can be broadly divided into the following three categories:

- (i) The Philanthropic group ;
- (ii) The Reformist group ; and
- (iii) The Revolutionary group.

THE PHILANTHROPIC GROUP

The Philanthropic group does not view the problem of the material and cultural poverty of the rural people in the context of the institutions and the basic structure of the rural society. It holds the conviction that it is possible to ameliorate the position of the rural people through direct humanitarian effort, without changing those institutions and structure. It evolves economic, educational and other programmes of village uplift which embody such items as creation of charity funds to help the village needy, moral appeals to landlords and such other groups to relax their pressure on peasants, establishment of hospitals and schools, and others.

The basic feature of the standpoint and the programmatic approach of this group to the problem lies in the fact that it attempts to improve the conditions of the rural population within the matrix of the existing institutions and structure of the rural society, by means of purely humanitarian endeavour.

THE REFORMIST GROUP

The Reformist group subscribes to the view that it is the malfunctioning of the existing rural social system and its institutions (and not the social system and its institutions in their basic essence), which is the social-genetic cause of the economic misery and social and cultural backwardness of the rural people. They, therefore, work for a healthy functioning of the social system and its institutions,

or, at most, for reforming them. They assert that once this institutional reform is accomplished, it will result in the all-sided betterment of the life of the rural population.

The distinguishing characteristic of the standpoint and the programmatic approach of this group to the problem lies in the fact that for elevating the conditions of the rural people at present it does not regard it necessary to replace the existing social system and its institutions by new ones but strives only to reform them.

THE REVOLUTIONARY GROUP

Finally, there is a third group whose standpoint and programmatic approach to the problem are based on a revolutionary conception. They think that the abysmal poverty, crass ignorance, and cultural backwardness of the mass of the rural people are fundamentally due to the existing social system and the institutions which are its organs to sustain that system. The social system and its institutions, they feel, cannot but breed these evils. They declare, therefore, that both the programme of individual aid and relief and that of institutional reform will be unable to achieve the desired end. They contend that no reform can appreciably liberate the rural people from want, disease, illiteracy, and lack of culture. They argue that new wine cannot be filled into the old bottles.

Thus, according to this group, the evils of the rural society are not the result of any malfunctioning of the rural social system or its institutions but are inherent in this system and institutions themselves, are the inevitable product of the natural functioning of the present social order. This group, therefore, evolves and attempts to carry out a programme of a revolutionary transformation of the rural social structure from its economic base upward.

While laying decisive emphasis on its social revolutionary objective, this group includes in its programme a number of items of the first two programmes. It, however, links its struggle to implement those items with the struggle for the change of the entire social system.

These three groups with their diverse and even conflicting programmes are at present struggling for hegemony in the agrarian area.

RURAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMMES, THEIR PRINCIPAL WEAKNESSES

Various individual groups, associations and parties, each according to its own light, are thus engaged in the movement of rural uplift and reconstruction. Among them are individual philanthropists and philanthropic bodies; social, political, religious, economic and

educational organizations including welfare associations; missionary groups; Governmental institutions and others.

We will make a few observations regarding the work of these groups and organizations.

(1) *Exclusive Concentration On One Aspect Of The Rural Life*

Some of them exclusively concentrate on one single aspect of the rural life like education, economic welfare, sanitation, crusade against reactionary social customs and practices, religious superstition, ethical uplift or fight against disease. They isolate one aspect of the rural life from its other aspects. The organic unity of the rural life and the interrelations and interdependence of its many aspects are thus lost sight of.

This results either in the abortion or limited success of their programme even when dealing with one single aspect of the rural life.

(2) *Predominantly Emotional Approach*

Most of these groups and organizations, while inspired by ethical and humanitarian motives, lack scientific training for the work they undertake. They forget that an objective study of the rural society and its conditions is vital for evolving a correct programme and methodology of work and that merely good intentions are no guarantee of successful social work. They forget that a patient gathering of factual data pertaining to the life of the rural people and a detailed concrete study of their specific social, economic, political and other conditions are important prerequisites for formulating a correct programme of rural work. A study of the psychological traits, ethnic and communal composition, customs and beliefs of the rural aggregate, is also indispensable for the purpose. Further, these groups and organizations require to have a concrete knowledge of the economic structure of the rural society, the specific system of land tenure prevailing in it, the various socio-economic groups bound up with its economy and with different and even conflicting interests, the religious and other ideologies which have a hold over their mind, the particular types of family and other social institutions existing there and many other things. Such knowledge is necessary because the task before them is not the renovation of a vague and vast rural society, in general, but of a specific type of rural society; not the amelioration of the abstract rural people but of a particular rural people with local limits, defined past and crystallized present conditions. It is, therefore, essential to study the particular rural society and its people in concrete details. Then alone, it is possible to evolve an appropriate programme of rural work for the recuperation of a particular rural society and the advance of the specific rural aggregate living in

that society. Then alone, also, it is possible to locate the specific social, economic, psychological, ideological and other obstacles in the way of the fulfilment of that programme. A rural aggregate in Gujarat is different from that in Saurashtra, Bihar or Maharashtra.

Many individuals and organizations oriented to the work of rural reconstruction and uplift lack this understanding. They evolve naive programmes of rural work which, not being based on concrete detailed knowledge of the specific rural society and its people, fail or meet with partial success. This breeds the sentiment of defeatism among them and results sometimes in their abandoning of the rural work altogether.

(3) *Lack Of Co-ordination Of Work*

Lack of co-ordination of activities in various spheres marks the work of some organizations and groups. Further, their activities are often based on conflicting value systems.

This, too, is detrimental to the success of the programme. It is obvious that all activities should be co-ordinated and should constitute a single organic stream of total work. Also it is evident that a single principle must determine and permeate the diverse activities in diverse fields. Otherwise there will ensure mutual negating of activities.

(4) *Insufficient Ability To Assess The Results*

Some groups and organizations exhibit insufficient ability for a proper assessment of the results of their efforts in various domains of rural work. Since they have, therefore, no adequate conception of the cumulative result of their activities, they get a hazy notion regarding their advance towards their objective. Inability to properly evaluate their work in terms of productivity also denies them that power of self-criticism which is also vital for a correct planning of next stages of work.

When work is not properly planned and correctly assessed, there is also the danger of deviating from the correct road to the goal.

Sporadic and unplanned forms of rural welfare work are also sometimes launched. In a number of instances, they degenerate into mere fads. This reveals unconscious lack of earnestness or absence of scientific understanding of the problem on the part of their sponsors. We find a mushroom growth of such efforts embarked upon by individuals and even institutions in the rural area. This tends to make the picture of the rural reconstruction work chaotic to some extent, and often leads the rural people to become victims rather than bene-

ficiaries of such endeavours since they yield unstable and distorted results.

(5) *Absence Of Proper Sociological Perspective*

The principal weakness characterizing these organizations however, generally lies in their lack of proper sociological understanding of the problem of rural reconstruction. To evolve a successful programme of rural reconstruction at a higher level, it is quite necessary to know the law governing the development of the rural society. The structure, the functioning and the objective tendencies of development of the existing rural society; the interconnectedness and the interdependence of various elements of that society (technical, economic, social, political, ideological; and the relative significance of those elements in determining the life of the rural society and their respective role in the total social change; require to be comprehended.

To change society consciously, we must have a science of society. Rural sociology is the science of rural society. The laws of the structure and development of rural society in general can aid us in discovering the special laws governing a particular rural society. Without the science of rural society, it is not, therefore, possible to get an authentic picture of a particular rural society. Rural sociology alone can provide a correct, organic, synthetic and multi-sided knowledge of a specific rural society and the tendency of its further evolution.

RURAL SOCIOLOGY, AN INDISPENSABLE GUIDE

Rural sociology will help the rural worker to make a correct diagnosis of its ills and will, further, enable him to evolve a correct prescription or programme to overcome those ills. If the diagnosis of the ills is erroneous or imperfect, the prescription itself will be unscientific and therefore futile. The uninformed rural worker will adopt unhistorical and inappropriate means to cure the defects and deficiencies of the rural social organisms. The social ills may have a deep-seated cause in the very social system itself and may be merely symptoms proclaiming the general disease of the social organism. Not knowing this, the rural worker will engage himself in a symptomatic treatment of the social ills which, as all physicians know, gives no relief or gives only a partial and temporary relief.

There is another grave danger for a rural worker who is ignorant of rural sociology. The present social evils are the features of the present society and therefore cannot be overcome by methods adopted to cure the social evils of bygone societies. For instance, solutions of the evils of self-sufficient society would not be adequate for the solution of the maladies of the present competitive commodity society. If the rural worker is unaware of this fact, he will at-

tempt to graft the former on the present society. He will recommend the resuscitation of the techniques, political systems or ethical concepts of the past societies to overcome the crisis of the present one. Such a view is unscientific. The evils of the present rural society arise out of its own inner structure and can be cured by means determined by its own trend of development.

The programme of rural reconstruction should be derived from a strict sociological analysis of the actual conditions and tendencies of the actually existing rural society and evaluation of the actual forces at work within it.

Here comes the decisive creative role of rural sociology which is as indispensable for the purpose of rural reconstruction as the science of medicine is to a medical practitioner.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

NEED FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGY

In conclusion a few observations may be made.

As observed at the outset, the study of rural society has become extremely urgent today when in a number of countries rural social structure is passing through an acute and even organic crisis; when its economy is rapidly disintegrating unfolding the perspective even of utter collapse; when social antagonisms and resultant conflicts between various social classes and groups comprising the rural humanity are being aggravated; in fact, when the rural social world is increasingly being transformed into a theatre of a far-reaching social revolution. In such a situation pregnant with mighty developments, it is the task of the rural sociologist to discover the law of development of rural society, to make a historico-theoretical analysis of that society and to locate the dynamics of its development.

Cognizance of the specific law of the development of the rural society is the basic prerequisite for its reconstruction. Its necessity for a correct grasp of the forces at work in the rural world in their interrelations and mutual interactions cannot be overstressed.

Only when the social programme and the social action undertaken in pursuance of that programme are based upon and guided by the scientific social theory, they are successful.

PRESENT VOLUME, ITS AIM

The present volume has the aim of, first, emphasizing the vital need of studying the life processes of the rural society analytically and synthetically and, secondly, suggesting some of the appropriate lines of approach for such a study.

An indication of the more significant among the various aspects of the rural life in their complex and variegated interconnections has been attempted here. Further, an effort has been made to point out how a composite picture of the multi-sided rural life process has yet to be built up.

Enormous research and theoretical labour are necessary to get a proper insight into the process of structural and functional transformations which the rural society has experienced in the past and the

present. Such an insight is absolutely essential to assess the specific weight and role of various factors whose actions and mutual interactions have provided movement to the rural society at various times.

Only such a study of the past and present rural social structures can help to generalize the total movement of the rural society into a single law of its development. Then alone rural sociology can become a science. And then alone a scientific programme of the reconstruction of the rural society and a scientific plan for its realization can be evolved.

Though the task is herculean, disconcertingly baffling, there is no ground for pessimism. And that for a variety of reasons.

GROWING AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

First, there is a growing awareness, on the part of the earnest section of the intelligentsia, of the urgency of the problem of the agrarian crisis and its solution. This section is increasingly realizing the futility, nay, even the harmful consequences, of sentimental, one-sided and other unscientific approaches to the problem. Such realization is generally the result of a deeper sociological investigation of the problem or of the practical failure of various plans of rural social reform or reconstruction.

GROWING LITERATURE ON THE PROBLEM

Secondly, there has accumulated in recent times enormous statistical and other factual material providing illuminating information about the rural society, past and present. Individual scholars—historians, economists, sociologists, anthropologists—as well as governmental and non-governmental bodies have made studies of the various aspects of the rural life and published considerable literature on the subject. The existence of this literature implies that the precondition for the discovery of the law of evolution of the rural society, so vital for a correct approach to the problem of the present debacle of that society, has been appreciably created. The student of the rural society has, at his disposal, enormous and varied material for scientific analysis and conclusions.

There exist today such sources of rural information as the Imperial, Provincial and District Gazetteers, the Government Census Reports, the Settlement and Survey Reports, the Reports on the Castes and Tribes of India, the Economic and other Surveys by various Governmental bodies and Commissions, the Archeological, Linguistic and other Surveys, the yearly Economic, Political, Educational and other publications, the recent research studies of Bureaus of Statistics and Economics and others. These are some of the sources

of concrete information about the Indian rural life. With careful indexing and editing, this literature can be of great value.

The works published on the Indian rural society by numerous scholars, Indian and foreign, since the time of Sir Henry Maine, constitute still another source of information on the subject. They deal with various aspects of the Indian rural life. This group of writers includes eminent historians, economists, politicians, administrators, social reformers, anthropologists and sociologists. However, as we stated, no comprehensive scientific history of the Indian rural society tracing its origin and development in successive historical stages and dealing with various aspects of the rural life in reciprocal interaction and historical movement, has still been written. The works of these scholars will, however, prove of considerable value for preparing such a history.

The literature on the Indian rural life in general and on the rural economy in particular published by the Indian National Congress, the Kisan organizations and other political parties, though meagre, also provides useful data about the life conditions of the rural people. The information lies scattered and hence requires to be assembled, classified and co-ordinated, so that it can be utilized for building up a composite picture of the rural scene.

Another source of information is provided by the studies in the form of various theses on different rural problems prepared by students for M.A. and Ph.D. degrees of various Indian Universities. The theses are the product of often strenuous study, inquiries, and field-work. A number of other educational and research agencies have also published literature on the subject.

The primary data gathered by various welfare organizations and welfare workers is also voluminous and, being based on case work, is detailed and living. These institutions and workers, however, generally make a purely empirical approach to the study of rural social phenomena. The material collected by them, hence, has to be sifted and generalized so that the historical tendency of the movement of the rural society can be detected.

The mass of material collected by the various abovementioned agencies lies in an unorganized form. It has to be very carefully catalogued, classified, summarized and edited so that it could be made available in a coherent form to those who are exploring the laws of that society.

New groups and institutions are also springing up in various parts of the country which have for their objective a thorough and detailed study of our rural world. Some of these bring with them a new social

outlook and adopt new methods of social research promising more fruitful results.

It is also necessary to refer to the growing literature on the rural society in the international world in recent decades. A part of this literature has a great theoretical and historical value. It deals with the genesis of the rural society and its transformation in different periods in a number of countries. A part of this literature is also devoted to the investigation of the existing rural societies in various countries. The student of Indian rural society may get useful theoretical hints and practical suggestions from a study of this literature for solving the Indian rural problems.

ITS INSUFFICIENT AND LOP-SIDED NATURE

It must, however, be noted that the literature on the rural society, international and Indian, is insufficient for an adequate understanding of the origin and development of the Indian society in the past and as it exists today with all its numerous provincial, district and local variants. While utilizing this literature, it is vitally necessary to organize further systematic field-studies of this society and its variants with a correct sociological approach. The basic defect characterising the existing literature is the absence of a co-ordinated study of the various aspects of the rural life process in their reciprocal interactions. This is due to the weakness of the methodology used in the investigation.

NEED FOR A PLANNED RESEARCH

An authentic picture of the Indian rural society, its origin, development and the existing state, can be built up only when a number of experts of different disciplines collaborate and synthesize the fruits of their labours in separate spheres of the rural life. It is the task of the rural sociologist to generalize the results of studies of the various experts at work on separate aspects of the rural life into a law of the movement of the rural society. Then alone an objectively true picture of the Indian society as a whole, its emergence and subsequent evolution through successive stages right up to the present, is also possible.

This alone can assist to visualize the problems arising from the crisis of the rural society in proper sociological perspective and evolve a correct programme of their solution. It will mean a programme of reconstruction of rural society in conformity with the real objective movement of the rural society and, therefore, lifting it to a higher level of material and cultural existence.

It is first necessary to evolve an all-India plan for the study of the rural society. An appropriate delimiting of rural zones should be made and a team of experts for each zone selected, who would organize a co-ordinated study of the various aspects of the rural society of that zone and evolve an integrated picture of that society. They can, then, study it historically, as the last link hitherto in the chain of the evolutionary series of the rural social structures of that zone which succeeded one another from stage to stage.

The study of the rural social structures of the different agrarian zones, of their origin and historical evolution, will pave way for the study of the Indian rural society, its origin and historical evolution, as one organic whole.

Such a historical, co-ordinated and systematic study of the Indian rural society is the prime prerequisite for a scientific understanding of its life processes today and for evolving an adequate programme of its reconstruction on a more advanced economic, social and cultural basis.

PART II
READINGS IN RURAL SOCIOLOGY

SECTION I

INTRODUCTORY

I

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF INDIA

A. R. DESAI

The achievement of Independence of India was a great landmark in the history of the Indian Society. However, the way in which Independence was granted, the shape which free India acquired, and the problems which the Indian Union was confronted with were unique.

Socially, India has been one of the most complex countries. It has a continuity of history and cultural heritage which extends back to millenniums. It is a country which has probably the largest number of pre-historic tribes. It has been a stage on which an immense drama of contact and conflict, fusion and fission, of a number of ethnic stocks, primitive tribes belonging to all stages of development, civilized communities and religious and linguistic groups has been enacted with an intensity and duration, probably unparalleled in any country except China. Its heritage includes legacy from Paleolithic and Neolithic groups, from civilized societies speaking the Dravidian Branch of language, from the Indo-Aryan stocks, from the Huns, the Saks, the Scythians, the Bactrians, the Greeks, the Muslims, the Christians and others. It has witnessed the growth of systems of social organization like the caste, the joint family and the village communities based on

self-sufficient village economy, and also of diverse types of feudal order and variegated feudal culture which are unique and which have left impression, nay have determined to a great extent the specific contour of the contemporary social organization.

Indian social landscape has been kaleidoscopic because of its changing pattern across ages.

Unless this unique past and its legacy are properly comprehended, it will be difficult to understand the complicated process of the economic, political, social, cultural and ideological developments, that have been taking place in the Indian Union after Independence.

However, for a proper study of the economic, political, social, institutional, cultural and ideological problems confronting the Indian people, it is necessary, as a first step, to acquaint ourselves with the composition of the population of the Indian Union. A systematic analysis and study of the population of the Indian Union from various angles, therefore, is a prerequisite to properly appreciate the scope, the scale and the depth of the process of transformation of the life process of this immense section of mankind.

The present essay represents an attempt to make a brief analysis of the population of the Indian Union from various angles with a view to provide a background on the basis of which the numerous social currents and cross-currents that are agitating the extant Indian society may be adequately comprehended.

We will first draw a statistical picture of India's population from various angles. We will then indicate from that analysis some of the principal forces which provide momentum to the Indian society.

INDIAN HUMANITY

India, next to China, is the world's most populous country. According to the Census of 1951, it has a population of 35,68,29,485 human beings. The population is further increasing at an average rate of 13 per thousand per annum. The average density of population in India is 312 per sq. mile though varying considerably from State to State. On an average, India has 947 females for every 1000 males.

Ethnologically, most of the major types of ethnic groups of mankind are represented in the country. According to physical appearance, as indicated in India Year Book 1956 the following five types could be easily distinguished: (a) The Negritoes of the Andaman Islands, having physical affinity with Asian and oceanic peoples like Semangs of Malaya, and Papuans of New Guinea, but not with the African Negroes or Negritoes; (b) The Veddids or Proto—Australians—major-

ity of the tribal peoples of the Central and Southern India. Genetically, they are supposed to be related to the Australians and the Europeans ; (c) The Mongoloids found in the mountain zones of North and North-East India ; (d) The Mediterraneans of Melanids are found in the Plains of South India. Generally, the word Dravidian was used for these groups incorrectly ; (e) The Indids are found mainly in North India, Central Deccan and the West Coast. Genetically and physically, they are considered by Anthropologists as forming a part of the South European Stock.

Broadly, the Indid type predominates in North India and Melanid type in South India. However, it should be remembered that the Indian population has emerged from the intermingling of these various ethnic groups. Physical Anthropologists, Ethnologists, Culture historians and linguists are trying to evolve a picture of the Indian society and its complex culture traits on the basis of correlating the cultures and languages of the Indian people with these ethnic stocks and thereby trace the positive interactions as well as frictions which have been occurring even today as a result of the still advancing process of inter-living of these groups. Interesting insights are being elaborated to study Indian history from this type of analysis.

INDIA, OVERWHELMINGLY RURAL

India is overwhelmingly rural. Out of 35.7 crores of people inhabiting the territory, 29.5 crores or 82.7 per cent live in 5,58,089 villages. Only 17.3 per cent, i.e. 5.2 crores, have urban setting provided by some 3,018 towns. It should be further noted that the overwhelming majority of the villages, viz., 3,80,020 of them contain less than 500 persons. We will refer to the implications of this rural setting subsequently.

PREDOMINANCE OF JUVENILES, CHILD MARRIAGES

The following Table portrays the distribution of population according to age, sex and civil conditions :—

Age Group	Total		Unmarried		Married		(in thousands) Widowed or divorced	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Below 1 yr.	5,821	5,608	5,821	5,608	—	—	—	—
1-4 years	17,939	17,939	17,939	17,908	—	—	—	—
5-14 years	44,708	41,989	41,804	35,737	2,833	6,118	66	134
15-24 years	30,672	30,052	16,627	5,184	13,660	24,041	384	827
25-34 "	27,875	26,633	3,701	733	23,122	23,781	1,052	2,129
35-44 "	22,032	19,528	1,150	304	19,323	15,346	1,559	3,178
45-54 "	15,719	13,898	604	173	13,076	8,314	2,038	5,412
55-64 "	9,064	8,024	299	89	6,777	3,384	1,998	5,201
65-74 "	3,867	3,976	104	37	2,533	1,092	1,230	2,847
75 and over	1,630	1,756	46	18	883	370	701	1,867
Age not stated	111	117	51	60	46	42	14	15
Total population (excluding displaced persons).	1,79,483	1,70,140	88,146	65,951	12,253	12,388	9,033	21,810

The presence of a large proportion of juveniles and a very low proportion of persons above the middle age eloquently reveal the complicated social problems which the Indian society has to face. The enormous number of child marriages and equally significant numerous character of child widows bring into the forefront the decisive need and the resultant herculean task of overhauling the Indian society.

LAND OF RELIGIONS

India is a land of numerous religions. It is inhabited by people belonging to almost all major religious and derivative religious cults providing rich complexity of other-wordly beliefs, rituals, sacrifices and institutional diversity. Even the Hindu Religion, which is followed by the vast bulk of people reveals great regional variations as well as religio-ideological diversity. The Table below indicates the composition of the population as distributed according to various religious beliefs.

Table II
Population according to Religion

Religion	Number (in lakhs)	Percentage to total population
Hindu	3,082	85.00
Muslim	354	9.92
Christian	82	2.30
Sikh	92	1.74
Jain	16	0.45
Buddhist	2	0.06
Zoroastrian	1	0.03
Other religions (tribal)	17	0.47
Other religions (non-tribal)... ..	1	0.03
All religions	3,507	100.00

INDIA'S MULTI-LINGUAL POPULATION

India presents a spectacle of a museum of tongues. According to the 1951 Census Report, there are 845 languages or dialects in the country. These include 720 Indian languages, each spoken by less than a hundred thousand persons and 63 non-Indian languages. However, it should be noted that 91 per cent of the total population, i.e. about 32.4 crores of people speak one or the other of the fourteen

languages specified in the Constitution. The following Table indicates the percentage of population speaking these fourteen languages :—

Table III

Language						Number of persons (in lakhs)	Percentage to total
Hindi	}	...	...	...	...	1,499	46.8
Urdu							
Hindustani							
Punjabi							
Telugu	...	...	...	...	...	330	10.2
Marathi	...	...	...	...	...	270	8.3
Tamil	...	...	...	...	...	205	8.2
Bengali	...	...	...	...	...	251	7.8
Gujarati	...	...	...	...	...	163	5.1
Kannada	...	...	...	...	...	145	4.5
Malayalam	...	...	...	...	...	134	4.1
Oriya ...	...	...	...	...	...	132	4.0
Assamese	...	...	...	...	...	50	1.5
Kashmari	...	...	...	...	...	0.05	
Sanskrit	...	...	...	...	...	0.01	

LINGUISTIC CONFLICTS

These fourteen languages have a long historic past. They have reached a high stage of development. Rich literatures expressing the dreams, the aspirations, the emotions and the thoughts of various peoples speaking these tongues have come into being. They are further considerably localised in specific territorial zones thereby transforming various Indian Linguistic groups into separate nationalities within the Indian Nation. Some of these languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam are associated with a body of traditions which have a predominantly Dravidian cultural background, differing in some respects qualitatively from the Indo-Aryan Group of languages. The difficulties involved in evolving a national language for the Indian Union can be appreciated only if this background is kept in mind. The great ferment, which has exploded into veritable tempests in contemporary India on the issue of the Reorganisation of States within the Indian Union, the objective of which has been to evolve administrative units composed of linguistic groups occupying specific territorial segments of India could be understood only if, as a preliminary step, this Linguistic composition of the Indian population is properly kept in mind. "About 1.2 crores of persons (3.2%) speak one or the other of the 23 tribal languages and nearly 1.8 crore persons (5.0 per cent) speak one or the other of the other Indian languages (or dialects) spoken by a lakh or more persons". The problem of providing scripts to these tongues, and the further issues involved in the supply of appropriate material and technical resources to help their development have to be intensely thought over in the general background of the poverty and scarce resources available to the society.

DARK CLOUD-ILLITERACY

According to the Census Report of 1951, 16.6% of the people were literate. The significance of the enormity of the situation where 83.4% of the citizens lacking the elementary instrument of culture needs no elaborate discussion. It means great reliance on vocal medium for the bulk of the people. It means enormous influence of that category of the means of spread of culture, which we call oral propaganda. It means the rise and disproportionate influence of those groups of leaders who wield great demagogic powers. It also indicates the significance of spoken languages and dialects for assimilating and shaping the cultural heritage by the bulk of the population. The problem of the proper medium of instruction and communication at different stages of the educational ladder takes on a new complexion in the multi-tongued population when it is visualised that a beginning has to be made for 83% of the population. It also raises the unpleasant problem of the cost of education and its proper apportioning at various stages of education and among various tongues. The problem of priorities with regard to the sharing of the limited resources acquires acute complexity in the light of the above situation.

The specific policy of spreading literacy in India will determine which castes, which lingual groups, which social strata of the society will gain initial advantages. Will the groups so privileged utilise these advantages for their own sectional interests or for the benefits of all? How will they influence the quality and the nature of education? The problem of illiteracy, linguistic group, socio-economic stratification and the motives of the mode of life are highly inter-connected. Their implications are great in terms of the trend of social development.

CASTE HIERARCHY

The institution of caste which emerged in India many centuries ago, which has a hoary history and has survived numerous political upheavals and military convulsions and which has been still persisting, though slowly losing vitality, due to the pressure of the forces of modern social, economic and political developments is a unique institution unparalleled in the history of mankind. The considerable role which this institution still plays in influencing the life of the Hindus, by far the largest section of the Indian people, makes it obligatory for an investigator of the life processes of the Indian society to carry on an intimate study of this institution in all its protean functioning. Caste decides to a great extent the social status and the vocation of a member of the Hindu community, which is hierarchically graded in numerous castes and sub-castes. It largely determines the opportunities accessible to him for material and cultural self-advancement. A Hindu is a prisoner of the caste or sub-caste to which he is shackled with all its traditional handicaps, and taboos. The life of

a Hindu is essentially and considerably lived within the matrix of the particular caste or sub-caste to which he is affiliated. This largely moulds his consciousness keeping it at a petty level.

Further caste differences also engender different patterns of domestic and social life, different cultural complexes, even differences in the type of houses which various caste groups inhabit. Not only that. Due to historical reasons, property rights exist, markedly in agrarian area, on caste lines as also administrative functions and occupations. It must also be noted that the massive and complicated inherited religious and secular culture of the Hindu community which still holds almost decisive sway over their mind is caste contoured. It has fixed the psychology of the various social groups and has evolved such minutely graded levels of social distance and superior inferior relationships that the social structure looks like a gigantic hierarchic pyramid with a mass of untouchable as its base and a small stratum of elite, the Brahmins, almost unapproachable, at its apex. The Hindu society is composed of hundreds of distinct self-contained caste 'worlds' piled one over the other.

CLASSIFICATION OF CASTES DURING BRITISH RULE

During the British period, these castes were broadly grouped into four categories, viz. the higher castes, the intermediate castes, the backward castes and the scheduled castes. After Independence, the Constitution of India has abolished all caste distinctions. However, this *de jure* abolition does not mean *de facto* abolition of the caste system in real life. The caste matrix of the Indian population has been deliberately omitted in the Census of 1951, except for some special groups. This has drawn a curtain over the most vital aspect of the Indian social life. Instead of utilising the census data for properly correlating the factor of caste with property ownership, wealth and linguistic, educational as well as other factors of vital social concern by eliminating the caste factor from the census study, the framers of the census have veiled the operation of a decisively important force which operates very subtly in retarding the growth of democratic social relations between the citizens of the Indian Union. Even more than that, this ostrich like ignoring of the caste has prevented the proper understanding of those forces which are evolving various devices to perpetuate a hierarchic and unjust social order.

CASTE MONOPOLY OF POWER

It has been observed by a number of students of the social life of the Indian people that there is a close correlation between the position of caste in the hierarchy of the Hindu social order and the respective status of its number with regard to wealth, economic rank,

class position, political power and accessibility to education and culture. It has been pointed out by some outstanding students of the Hindu society that a couple of dozens of castes in India hold the monopoly of economic resources, political power, and educational and cultural facilities available. As has been indicated by a number of studies, an overwhelming majority of agrarian labourers or unprivileged classes of the Indian society spring from untouchables, some of the backward castes and the uprooted scheduled tribes.

CASTE AND DEMOCRACY

This point has to be properly borne in mind for a number of reasons. It alone gives clue to the live processes, both of contacts and conflicts, which provide dynamics to the Indian social life. It helps us to understand a number of movements that erupt in different parts of the country such as the Anti-Brahmin movement in South, the anti-Bhatji and Sethji (Anti-Brahminic and Anti-Businessmen) movements in Maharashtra. It also helps us to gain an insight into numerous linguistic, communal and class conflicts wherein the comingling of certain castes with certain exploiting classes symbolically representing certain communal or linguistic groups operate as an undercurrent in these movements. It also raises a significant problem. Will it be possible to abolish caste system and caste hierarchy in fact without adopting measures of basic changes in the economic structure? Could cultural and other forces be released such as would create economic security and extend cultural facilities to the lowest strata, and abolish the caste system and caste hierarchy in reality?

EMERGING SMALL FAMILY PATTERN

Village self-sufficient community, caste system and joint family were the three pivotal social institutions on which the Hindu social structure was reared. A general feeling about the family system prevailing in India is that it is still largely joint based on the joint living of members belonging to three generations. However, the findings of the Report of the Census of 1951 reveal a different reality.

The census differentiates 4 types of households: one having three members or less as a 'small' household; one which has 4, 5 or 6 members as a 'medium' household; one which has 7, 8 or 9 members as a large household; and one which has 10 or more members as a 'very large household'. The Table given below indicates how many households of each type are found in a typical village and a typical town.

Table IV

Type of household	No. of households in a	
	Typical Village	Typical Town
Small	33	88
Medium	44	41
Large	17	16
Very Large	6	5
Total	100	100

The fact that nearly 77% of the households in village constitute small and medium households and further that every third household in the village constitutes a family having three or less than three persons clearly discloses the fact that the traditional joint family of the Hindu society is rapidly experiencing disintegration. The habit of breaking away from the joint family and setting up small families has been growing. Though some sociologists have doubted the sharp formulation of the Census Authorities, it is admitted by all that the traditional joint family is disintegrating and is creating varied types of family structures which have lost their old vitality and functions and which have still not crystallized themselves into healthy nuclear family types.

DISINTEGRATION OF THE JOINT FAMILY—ITS IMPLICATIONS

The traditional joint family was a universe in itself, performing all the important economic, political, social, religious, recreational and cultural functions in the old society. The joint family has broken down. However, in India, the functions which should have been taken over by the other specialised associations and groups are not shouldered by these bodies either effectively or in a sufficient measure thereby hurdling the individual into a whirlpool of social and cultural ferment unprotected. The policies of the present government are also so moulded that they generate the forces which would accelerate this process of disintegration of joint family. What are the implications of this process in terms of economic security, political stability, social solidarity and co-operative endeavours, cultural designs and personality and character integrity? How far the Indian society which has lost its old stability and design will create a new equilibrium of various institutions and associations? What measures will really generate a new progressive and higher harmony of interpersonal relations?

These are some of the problems which emerge from the analysis of the family composition of the Indian population as it exists to-day.

CLASS STRATIFICATION OF INDIAN SOCIETY

As observed earlier India is overwhelmingly rural. It is a poor underdeveloped country with a national income of Rs. 9,950 crores

in 1953-54, and a *per capita* income in the same year of Rs. 266.5 both computed at 1948-49 price level.

Under the impact of the British rule and its economic policies, India has been transformed from a feudal to a capitalist country. The Indian society is now stratified into new classes like capitalists (commercial, industrial and financial), professional classes like lawyers, doctors and others, fairly large-sized middle class employees and an overwhelming section of the urban proletariat living on wages in urban areas. While in rural areas we find the society regrouped into classes of agrarian landlords, peasant proprietors, tenants and agricultural labourers along with strata of ruined artisans and a group of money-lenders and traders. It is unfortunate that a proper analysis of the distribution of wealth among various classes has not been tabulated either in the Census Report of 1951 or in the Indian Year Books.

RURAL CLASS STRUCTURE

We will briefly portray the class composition as it prevails in agrarian area. We will also indicate the concentration of land that has taken place there. It will reveal how the agrarian India which was founded on a balanced self-sufficient village economy on the basis of equilibrium of agriculture and artisan industry and functioning through village panchayat, caste councils and joint family and producing for subsistence before the advent of the British rule has undergone a qualitative transformation. The following statements unfold this class configuration that has taken place in agrarian areas.

The available cultivable land *per capita* is only .9 acres. It indicates the enormous pressure of population on land. About 75 per cent of the total sown area is under food crops. "The gross value of these crops is only almost equal to that of cash crops though the latter are sown on merely 25 per cent of the land. About 35% of the total produce is sold by the cultivators. In nearly two-thirds of these sales transactions the commodity is delivered to the trader in the village itself". "The marketing of agricultural produce is largely in the hands of a body of men, who, as distinguished from Government and Co-operatives, represent private interests, and who control both the sources of credit and disposal of the produce. Often enough, therefore, the cultivators' position is that of having to bargain, if he can, with someone who commands the money, commands the credit; commands the market and comes with transport". This point is emphasised to highlight the immense power of the new class of creditors and traders in an underdeveloped rural economy which is switching on from production for subsistence to that of market. In the peculiar environment based on the hierarchic caste system, the combination of superior caste prestige and this economic hold needs to be properly understood.

The following is the picture of the rural class structure as it has emerged after the British withdrawal:—

Agricultural landowners	..	22.2 per cent.
Agricultural tenants	...	27.2 „
Agricultural labourers	...	30.4 „
Non-agriculturists	...	20.2 „

The inequality of the cultivators' holdings is also considerable. "Holdings below one acre formed about 17 per cent; those between 1 and 2½ acres about 21 per cent; and those between 2½ acres to 5 acres another 21 per cent. These accounted respectively for 1.0, 4.5 and 9.9 per cent of the total area. At the other end of the scale 16 per cent were in the group 10 to 25 acres accounting for 32.5 per cent of the area and another 5.6 per cent. above 25 acres covering about 34 per cent of the area and further. The medium cultivator, numerically two-fifths of the cultivators, has less than a third of the sown area under him. There is an even steeper descent when we come to the small cultivators, his sown area is just a little more than a tenth of the total area sown by the cultivators."

THE UNPRIVILEGED IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

The rise of the agrarian proletariat, the existence of a large section of uneconomic holders of land, and the prevalence of an enormous group of ruined artisans who constitute the bulk of the non-agricultural section of the rural population reveal the tragic tale of the miserable economic life lived by the large section of rural population in the Indian Union.

Viewed from the standard of economic stratification, India contains the following categories of people whose problems are becoming explosively urgent:—

- (1) Vast groups of Scheduled Tribes who are almost living the life of agrarian serfs or debt slaves.
- (2) Agricultural labourers whose grim tale of existence is portrayed in the studies conducted by agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee.
- (3) The cultivators of uneconomic holdings gripped in the ever-tightening princer of unprofitable deficit production, taxation, claims of the money-lender and market fluctuations.

- (4) A large majority of artisans and craftsmen who are progressively being ruined due to the blows of competitive market economy.
- (5) The bulk of the petty producers who just produce enough in normal times to make both ends meet.
- (6) The bulk of rural unemployed or under-employed whose position and horrible helpless mode of existence is indescribable
- (7) In urban areas, the unemployed, the wage labourer, the bulk of middle class employees, handicraftsmen and petty shop-keepers and traders constitute the bulk of the population who form the economically underprivileged groups living a precarious, insecure existence. Along with these sections it would be proper to mention the group of displaced refugees who are by far the largest section are still living a very unstable and economically precarious life.

WEALTH CONCENTRATION IN INDIA

Thus India is not merely poor and underdeveloped but is having a class stratification wherein a few capitalists (financial, industrial and commercial), a few money-lenders and traders (many a time fused with either urban capitalist groups or with land-owning sections in the rural India), a small section of the upper stratum of the professional groups, a layer of big landlords, prosperous capitalist agricultural farmers and the top stratum of the peasant proprietors, have concentrated wealth and economic resources among themselves.

This peculiar class configuration is very subtly correlated with the groups with specific linguistic, caste and educational stratifications, making the problem of economic, social and cultural progress of the Indian people as a whole complex and difficult.

PROBLEMS BEFORE INDEPENDENT INDIA

What should be the nature of economic planning in India? What should be the nature of the institutional devices which would assist the transformation of the present population into economically secure, politically equal, socially nonhierarchic and culturally equipped with values which are embodied in the aspirations laid down in the Preamble of the Constitution? What will be the nature of levers for accomplishing such a transformation of the Indian Society?

These and a number of other issues emerge when we make even a cursory sociological analysis of India.

II

SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. R. DESAI

The object of this essay is to indicate, in a very brief manner, the Sociological problems involved in the process of economic development that has been launched by the government of the Indian Union.

MEANING OF SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

By Sociological problems, we mean here, the problems of replacing the old social organization, modifying or discarding old social institutions, altering or removing old forms of social controls and revising or liquidating old agencies of social change, with a view to overcome their retarding role in the economic development of the Indian people. Further, we also mean, by this, the problems connected with the evolving new web of social relations, new types of social institutions, new devices of social control and also new agencies and factors of social change which would be appropriate for a rapid and harmonious development of the economic life of the Indian people.

Like a number of Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries which were under the domination of various Imperialist Powers, India was also kept underdeveloped by British Imperialism. It was kept predominantly as an agrarian, raw material producing appendage of British Imperialism. Its industrial development was predominantly regulated to suit the needs of British Capitalism. Heavy industries were not permitted to grow. Even regarding light industries, only those were allowed to develop which either did not compete seriously with similar home industries or which provided better and more profitable opportunities for the investment of British Capital. In fact the British and other foreign capital dominated Indian industries during the British period. Indian economic development was carried on under the dictatorship of British Imperialism.

This, as is well-known, led to a lop-sided unsymmetrical dependent and weak development of the country. The British rulers thus weakened the old motif, the old technique and the old organization of production but did not replace them by healthy new ones to any extensive degree. They introduced the Capitalist mode of production in India but only to the extent that subserved the interests of the British economy and not sufficiently enough to organically weld the

entire mechanism of production of the country within the Capitalist economic framework. They introduced mechanization in production which proved just effective enough to dislocate the old pre-British economy for their own purpose but not sufficiently extensive as to make it the basis of the entire national economy. They initiated Commercialization of production and money economy in the Country but only to the extent that would subserve their exploitative interest and not the organic developmental economic needs of the Indian society. Thus, under the British rule, a hybrid national economy developed in India composed of two inharmoniously interconnected sectors, viz. a sector organized for market and an inherited sector which predominantly survived and functioned for subsistence.

While the British rulers thus distorted and retarded the free harmonious development of the Indian economy, they also made a peculiar dent into the social organization, social institutions and social outlooks of the Indian people.

The traditional self-sufficient village community, which was based on equilibrium of agriculture and artisan industry, which operated through the village panchayat, caste and joint family institutions and was governed by custom and which subscribed to other-worldly, fatalistic, stationary outlooks, was almost fatally undermined. However, it was not replaced by a new social framework, a new institutional matrix, a new outlook corresponding to and in harmony with the new type of economy. In fact, in absence of these, the introduction of the new legal system resulted only in disorganizing the then prevailing social relations and introducing chaos in these. The old principle of co-ordination and co-operation (though based on hierarchy, inequality and authority) on which the pre-British community was based, was replaced by the principle of competition which set into motion a whirlpool in the social structure. Further, the restricted insufficient and deformed development of the new economy prevented the full blossoming of a new form of social unity and solidarity (national in character) and a new modern outlook. Every development in the material, social and ideological domain, exhibited mainly two characteristics, hybridness and underdevelopment.

Such was the economic and social legacy of the British rule left to the Indian people at the time of the achievement of national independence.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Government of the sovereign and free Indian Union has earnestly set to itself the herculean task of the reconstruction of the economy of India. Its policy of economic development is slowly taking shape through its Five-Year plans.

We shall divide the sociological problems confronting the Indian Government for a successful implementing of its schemes of economic development into two categories.

PROBLEMS OF NEGATIVE CHARACTER

The first category of problems are of a negative character. They arise out of various types of social legacies which work as an obstacle to the progressive achievement of the economic developmental programme. They are due to the immense deadweight of social, institutional and ideological superstructure which may have corresponded to the past, authoritarian, and traditional society based on the mainly subsistence economy but which still persists and works as a shackle on the developing new economy. This group of problems arise out of the persistence of old social institutions like caste, authoritarian joint family, tribes, traditional religious institutions, serfdom and others. They also emerge out of old forms of social control like supernatural sanctions, authoritarian norms, complicated and intricate caste, family tribal, religious and other customary sanctions permeating almost every pore of the life of the Indian humanity. They also arise out of the old world outlook which was basically religious, other-worldly, fatalistic and anti-democratic in content. They spring also from the strong parochial inter-personal ties leading to sectional, petty-tribal, kin, caste, family, religious or regional loyalties detrimental to national and broad human emotions. They further emanate from large-scale illiteracy, ill-health, unemployment, underemployment or weightage of employment in favour of certain castes or certain regional groups.

PROBLEMS OF POSITIVE CHARACTER

The second category of the Sociological problems arise from the very nature of the economic development which has been inaugurated by the Indian government.

They arise out of the policy of industrialization, of commercialization, of the introducing of money economy in every corner of the country. They arise out of its agrarian policy and, from the very character of the economic order which it wishes to establish. The government has become the biggest single agency of economic development. It thereby generates currents of social processes which are of unique significance as we shall observe subsequently.

SOCIAL OBSTACLES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We shall now survey the Sociological problems in relation to the economic development in greater detail to have a clearer view of them.

In an interesting report published by the United National dealing with "Processes and Problems of Industrialization in Underdeveloped Countries" it has been pointed out that among the three basic obstacles to economic development in under-developed countries, the social and institutional framework and values inherited from the past constitute an important obstacle.

CASTE SYSTEM—AN ILLUSTRATION

The Caste System in India provides one of the best examples of this. The retarding role and the reactionary significance of this institution is still very insufficiently realized by the students of India's economic development.

Though this institution was affected during the British rule, and though it has been abolished theoretically and juridically by the Constitution of Free India, its significance in real life, its influence on the economic development, its direct effect upon the patterns of property relations and patterns of consumption, and its impress upon the configurations of power structure in the economic, political, social and cultural fields is still not properly comprehended and hence gravely underestimated.

Caste prevents mobility of the people so essential for dynamic economic development. It prevents certain groups from taking to certain vocations, certain patterns of economic behaviour, certain forms of consumption. It obstructs the growth of a socially mobile population which would be conducive to easy and quick manning of various vocations.

One of the interesting findings by some of the scholars of Indian society is that most of the controlling positions in economy, administration, and cultural pursuits are monopolized by a few castes all over India. Not merely that. Some of the castes of a few regions today even control the destiny of the entire people of the country, leading to a number of caste, economic, and regional tensions.

This monopoly position of certain castes and groups of a certain linguistic zones has generated a peculiar unrest in the modern competitive social setting. It engenders and keeps alive a bitter competitive struggle among the privileged groups themselves as well as between them and the unprivileged groups also. This struggle exercises a highly detrimental effect on the development of a healthy national economy.

A closer study of a number of tensions which have emerged and which are rampant in India, when properly investigated, reveals, as one of the important causes, the caste background.

PERSISTENCE OF BACKWARD TYPES OF LOYALTIES

Another sociological implication of the legacy of the caste and other pre-industrial social institutions is the persistence of backward types of loyalties resulting into factionalism and division of the Indian people into groups with petty caste and other group egos to the detriment of the growth of a highly developed national consciousness.

As pointed out by the UNO Report on 'Processes and Problems of Industrialization in Under-developed countries', "Another characteristic of pre-industrial society found in all its sub-divisions and at all levels, is factionalism that is the tendency of the society to be divided by caste and class cleavages, ethnic and religious distinctions, differences in cultural traditions and social pattern, kinship loyalties and regional identifications, and so on. These divisions tend to inhibit the development of a feeling of unity in the society and of identity among its members and as a result the individual's sense of personal loyalty and duty may be limited to the members of a very narrow social environment; his family, his clan, local community, or parochial circles groupings. The normative pressure rooted in such an environment may profoundly affect the conduct of the individual in external situations and relations. In particular they may pose difficult problems for personnel recruitment and management".

This parochial mentality together with the old outmoded institutions in an under-developed country, obstructs the proper economic development in a number of ways.

(1) First, it leads to the practice of nepotism. Not efficiency and merit but ingroup loyalty often becomes the basis of the selection of personnel. It leads to favouritism, corruption, monopolization, all those practices which militate against healthy economic progress of the nation.

(2) It also results in the growth of the harmful practices of wrong (unproductive) investment patterns and wrong consumption patterns. Such fields of activity as speculation, hoarding, moneylending, landowning and trading attract capital with far greater temptation than industrial enterprises. A considerable amount of wealth is also squandered in conspicuous consumption. Traditional outlooks, social mores and institutional compulsions on the background of the scarce resources are largely responsible for this. The herculean efforts made by the Government of the Indian Union to plough back these resources from those unhealthy economic activities and to divert them in proper industrial channels bear eloquent testimony to the pernicious impact of old social institutions and old outlooks on the healthy economic development of the Indian society.

(3) It also generates distorted attitudes to work, to the problem of efficiency, to the selection of vocations, also to the allocation of resources and patterns of production and consumption. It further prevents the rapid growth of those secular, positive, scientific, and technologically oriented approaches which are so vital for the expansion and development of an economic system.

(4) It also obstructs the growth of those mores and sanctions which are basic to a developing economy in modern times, viz. mores and sanctions founded on law, respect for personality, concept of equal citizenship and also based on contract.

There are a number of other sociological problems of this group which relate to economic development. Limitation of space, however, precludes discussion on these.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

We will now briefly survey the sociological problems which arise as a result of the positive implementation of the policy of economic development which has been launched by the Government of the Indian Union.

It is unfortunate that while a number of evaluation and progress reports of the economic measures adopted by the Government of the Indian Union have been published, no serious attempt has still been made to evaluate the sociological implications of these measures.

We shall hazard our views on this on the basis of some findings of a few scholars as well as on that of the findings of some international associations which have studied the sociological problems involved in the efforts to transform under-developed countries into prosperous ones. UNESCO publications in the Tensions and Technology series indicate a number of sociological problems of economic development.

We will mention a few typical instances.

Industrialization, mechanization, commercialization and spread of money economy are the fourfold devices by means of which economic development is attempted to be worked up.

INDUSTRIALISATION, MECHANISATION AND THEIR SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

It has been found that industrialisation uproots the old division of labour, creates new occupational patterns demanding new training, new discipline, new routine, and a new mode of living. It has been found that "in introducing a programme of industrialization or building of great public works and large factories, such countries have in-

roduced radical change in the standards of living, drastically curtailing consumers' goods. Usually the effects have been much more far-reaching and costly in human welfare than this statement implies".

Further, "Mechanisation itself, whether in agriculture or in industry, separates man from the traditional processes and techniques of his social units, from the skills which he learned as an aspect of his belongingness with his family or of his identification with his father or line of ancestors. Finally, even on small farm, where even cash crops have been introduced, the effect of the new money economy have often been of the same kind as with the introduction of industrial wages".

COMMERCIALISATION AND ITS SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Commercialization also creates numerous problems. It brings about a shift in power and authority in the village. Not the farmers and producers but owners and administrators are becoming the ruling groups. The centre of political power of the village shifts from elders and the old gentry to usurers, merchants, landlords, prosperous capitalist farmers, and the group of officials. As pointed out by an UNESCO report, "Commercialisation unaccompanied by healthy system of production is thus shown to be a deteriorating factor..... although it at first brings a transitory period of prosperity."

IMPLICATION OF MONETIZATION IN AGRICULTURE

Similarly, spread of money economy is also fraught with numerous sociological problems. As Mr. Sengupta has pointed out, "it has been shown that higher monetisation of different sectors absolutely and relatively creates several dangers of which the authority should be aware. These dangers are : (i) greater susceptibility to internal and external propagation of cyclical ups and downs with relative deterioration of the agriculturist, (ii) greater money illusion and hence more uneven distribution of burdens of fluctuating prices, (iii) greater proportion of expenditure on non-food item, and non-necessities, (iv) greater fluctuation in land values, (v) greater price-spreads of food articles, (vi) lower percentage of village retention and (vii) greater propensity to stock for mediate links in the economy and uneven land concentration. Monetary and fiscal policy in future must take account of the implied threat of putting more money into the economy, some spilling out to villages". And further as observed by a scholar, "The introduction of money economy has usually meant atomization of the individuals within family, complete destruction of the structuring of family relationships, and of the social and economic system of the group.....the money economy has meant secession and revolt, the undermining of parental authority and the authority of

the tradition and this has resulted in the rise of the 'young generation' as a class apart. Marriage is often no longer a contract between families but. . .one between a man and a woman".

Thus industrialization, mechanization, commercialization and introduction and development of money economy which are attempted to be extended and made universal in our country as a part of policy of economic development are generating sociological problems.

If the ultimate object of economic development is the raising of the levels of living, the provision of higher standards of nutrition, housing and health, of a larger *per capita* volume of manufactured goods and leisure, occupational and income security and greater cultural facilities, its fulfilment will demand great and drastic social changes. New property institutions will be required to be built up, new family organization will have to be evolved. Provision of cultural and social amenities, which will be a substitute for the loss of old form of mutual aid and customary co-operation shall have to be made. India is overwhelmingly rural. To transform this agrarian country into an industrial one, a vast network of new institutions, new associations, new forms of co-operative social activities, new forms of secular, equalitarian and democratic norms and mores and new techniques of overhauling the outlook of the people will have to be created. New appropriate organizations and structural patterns to compensate for the loss of old stability assured by caste and joint family shall have to be conceived and brought into being.

Thus the programme of economic development launched by the Government of the Indian Union raises numerous positive sociological problems.

TWO DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

How far this Government will be able to successfully resolve the problems arising out of the needs of the healthy economic development will depend upon whether its aim of the economic development itself is to evolve a society founded on the objective of production for the profits of few, or that of production for the satisfaction of the needs of the people.

The two different objectives of economic development will engender two qualitatively different groups of sociological problems.

SECTION II

HISTORICAL

I

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS IN INDIAN HISTORY*

B. SUBBARAO

For an intelligent understanding of the pattern of development of cultures in India, one should begin with the geographic factors.

The pioneer of geographic studies in India was F. J. Richards, who indicated the main trans-continental communication system and the pattern of migrations based on it, by a brilliant analysis of Indian history. Outside the sub-continent, the most important region at the "dawn of civilization" was the Afrasian dry zone covering the great river valleys of Western Asia and North Africa. The great cultural developments in that area and the progressive desiccation has resulted in radial migrations of people to the east. This position has made India a zone of constant immigration, owing to its location on the margin of the Eurasian continent. But the magnitude of the alluvial plains of Indus and Ganges and the relative solidity of the physical barriers have, to a great extent, offset the disadvantage of her location. It is idle to speculate at the state of our knowledge of human evolution in

*Reproduced from *The Personality of India*, by B. Subbarao, pp. 5-11.

general, and of early man in India in particular, about the beginnings of human life in this sub-continent. But in the subsequent periods, it is well-known that every new wave of people, who entered the Indo-Gangetic plains as conquerors or fugitives, very rapidly lost their individuality in this melting pot of cultures and added their own indistinguishable element that has gone into the composition of this Indian Culture Complex. The greatest example of this is the Indus Civilization itself with its obvious affinities, specially at the initial stages, to those of Western Asia, but with the distinct stamp of the great river valley in whose lap it flourished. But it left its deep imprint on the whole development of the Indian Civilization of the succeeding ages.

INFLUENCE OF COAST LINES

The next important factor is India's long coast line with its convenient anchorages. This has played no mean role in the interchange of cultures as it has kept a window open to the great civilization of Western Asia and the Mediterranean region. But it must be emphasised here that in our present state of knowledge of Indian Archaeology, we are not in a position to corroborate the vague references which occur in literature—Indian and foreign to maritime trade and other contacts. We get definite and palpable material evidence of these contacts only in the early centuries of the Christian Era.

REFUGE ZONES

Within the country, the wide inviting alluvial plains, opening on to the main gateways to Western Asia, an older land mass of Peninsular Indian cut up into important river valleys separated by ridges of hills and forests. This feature, in particular, has enabled the earlier inhabitants to isolate themselves in what may be called 'cul de sacs' or refuge zones.

In this feature, India stands midway between Europe on the one hand and Africa and Australia and Oceania on the other. In Europe, there were continuous cultural impacts from Western Asia and the Mediterranean region. Besides, "every dominant civilization imposed its cultural pattern on all people within its orbit" and as pointed out by Prof. Haimendorf, "the geographic conditions did not favour isolation of refuge areas." In Africa, on the other hand, the two wide deserts of Sahara and Kalahari with the huge equatorial forests in between have completely isolated a large portion of the continent, and the inhabitants have not advanced beyond the stages of primitive agriculture, stock raising and hunting. Only the coastal belts facing the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean have to some extent escaped this fate. Besides, with the intensive exploitation of North African belt during and prior to the Roman Empire, man lent his evil hand to Nature in turning it into a desert, making it more or less a blind

alley of civilization. Australia and Oceania were completely isolated, and but for small scale island-hopping adventurers, their isolation was broken only with the much later European colonial expansion.

CHIEF RIVER BASINS

India displays both these phenomena, and stands midway. The chief river basins of the country: Indus, Ganges, Narmada, Tapi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri, were in turn penetrated and exploited by large-scale agricultural communities, driving the older and static people in a more primitive economy, into the forested mountains where they have survived to this day. The main river basins of the country with a rainfall between 20 and 40 inches, which can sustain large-scale agricultural communities, have been colonized or occupied. One can notice a fine correlation between this optimal rainfall zone and vegetation map of the country showing areas cleared for cultivation.

AREAS OF RELATIVE ISOLATION

In between these two categories of areas of attraction of perennial nuclear regions and the area of isolation or cul de sac, we have what may be called, areas of relative isolation. These, on account of their location away from the main trans-continental communications, display a different pattern of development but their isolation was broken up slightly later than the areas of attraction.

PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIAL CULTURE

Accepting this fundamental concept of areas of attraction, relative isolation and isolation, the whole pattern of development of material culture, can be defined as one of horizontal expansion of the higher cultures, leading to a displacement, contraction and isolation of the lower cultures in different parts of the country, at different periods, and at different cultural levels. The divergence in the country is due to the difference in the cultural milieu of the first large-scale agricultural communities, in the different regions. Naturally, this cultural development in space and time was closely controlled by the geographic features of the individual regions and the relative effectiveness of the barriers—physical and human. This interaction has given rise to a very interesting pattern which can be seen in the fundamental unity of Indian culture with its associated variety. Following Ratzel and Vidal De La Blanche, we can describe these smaller nuclear zones as "Provincial States" within a "National State." The former may be defined as "complicated economic units, opening on to the same routes, converging on the same river, commanding one another and finding it necessary to exchange their produce and their means of defence: in short societies for mutual protection moral and physical solidarity."

CONCEPT OF REGIONS

What is the criterion of this sub-division ? Various methods have been tried by different authors. This old concept of regions, has received a new life in the hands of modern geographers. According to E. W. Gilbert, "Geography is the art of recognizing and describing the personalities of regions." Among the systems based on pure geomorphological features, the most satisfactory one seems to be that of Professor M. B. Pithawala. It is based on the main physiographic subdivisions: Himalayan uplands, Indo-Gangetic plains and Peninsular India. These are again sub-divided on geological and morphological features. But from the point of view of cultural studies, the finest analysis, of Indian geographic regions is contained in Spate's recent work on India and Pakistan. But since we have already explained the function of hill and jungle belts, we can proceed on that basis. It is very difficult to determine the linear boundaries and hence an attempt is made here to ascertain the foci of the various zones. This system has the advantage of defining regions academically and not suit the convenience of the politicians. The most important belt, running right across the country from the west coast to the delta of the Ganges, may be described as the Vindhyan complex, comprising the Satpuras, Vindhyas, Mahadeo hills, Gavaligarh, Maikal range, Hazaribagh range, the Chota Nagpur, Singhbhum and Manbhum plateaus. This is also the most populous tribal belt sheltering Bhils, Dangs, Gonds, Santals, Uraons, Baigas, Gadabas, Marias and a host of other tribes. Running almost at right angles to this system at its western end, is what may be called the Western belt beginning with the Aravallis (almost touching Delhi), the Sahyadris, and the long chain of Western Ghats up to the southern tip of the peninsula. Beginning in a geographic order, we have Bhils, Dangs, Worli, Toda, Kurumbar, Kadar, Puliyan, Muthuvan, etc., inhabiting this zone. At its eastern end, the Vindhyan complex is joined by the Eastern Ghats, which run right across more or less parallel to the east coast upto 13°N latitude and then take an oblique turn south west wards to join the Western Ghats south of the Mysore plateau. The most important tribes living in this belt are Savaras, Baiga, Chenchu, Reddi, Irulas and Yenadis etc.

The ethnographic studies in India based on modern methods have not yet made sufficient progress. But one can see the close relation between the thick jungle and rain forests and the main centres of the so called primitive tribes. There is a harmonious adjustment of their physical and cultural environment, which has enabled them to survive. The significance of these belts of jungles and hills cannot be exaggerated. Depending on the depth of these belts, they have managed to survive the pressure of expansion of the people of the plains. While the villages of the plains are generally nucleated we get the dispersed type of settlements in the uplands.

REGIONS AND THEIR FOCI

Now working on this system, we can easily define the regions and their foci. Bounded by the Aravallis and the desert of Rajaputana on the east, and the Sulaiman and Kirthar ranges in the west, is the Indus basin draining the Central Himalayas. This can be roughly sub-divided at the point, where the hills from the west and the desert from the east converge near the Bugti country into the upper and the lower, corresponding to Punjab and Sind respectively. Beginning with the Delhi gap, where the Aravallis converge towards the Himalayas, the Gangetic basin runs east from the narrow divide. On its south lies the Vindhyan Complex. The lower deltaic region of Ganges, as it leaves the Vindhyan Complex, is Bengal. The Valley of Brahmaputra is Assam. Forming as it were a little triangle constituted by the Aravallis in the west and the Vindhyas running obliquely towards the Gangetic basin, is the plateau of Malwa, drained by the rivers—Chambal, Banas, Sipra and Son. Lying south of the Vindhyas and constituting the upper basins of the rivers Krishna and the Godavari and more or less co-extensive with the Deccan Trap area, is Maharashtra. The lower basins of these two great rivers constitute Andhra. The southern part of the Krishna basin more or less constituting the rocky triangle formed by the Eastern and the Western Ghats viz., the Mysore plateau, is Karnatak. At its southern end, it is drained by the river Kaveri. Beginning from the constriction of the Nagar hills and the Pulicat lake and running right along the east coast is Tamilnad. The narrow coastal plain on either side of the Palghat gap in the Western Ghats is Kerala. The Valley of Mahanadi surrounded by hills and plateaus all round constitutes Orissa. The northern part of the West coast and the peninsula of Saurashtra, abutting on the desert of Rajaputana is Gujarat. Rajaputana really consists of two natural regions : Mewar and Marwar on either side of the Aravalli ranges. Mewar, drained by the river Banas, falls into the Gangetic basin and is more or less an extension of the Malwa plateau. The semi-arid desert country, Marwar, lies to the west of the mountain range.

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION COINCIDE WITH LINGUISTIC

It may be noted that each of these regions started with a well endowed focus, around which the neighbouring areas merged. Hence, it is no accident that these areas correspond more or less to the linguistic divisions of the country. After all, language is the product of a social tradition and in itself reacts on other modes of thinking. The very genesis of our modern linguistic units in their historical setting, is one of the most important proofs of these latent and dormant geographic factors, which in a proper political environment led to the present pattern. This process resulted sometimes in the division of larger units (Krishna-Godavari basins) and at other times in the fusion

of contiguous units (Gujarat). A very interesting example of the former type is the division of the Krishna-Godavari basins into Maharashtra and Andhra, both occupying the either end of the valleys. As Spate puts it, "the boundry of Maratha speech shows a striking accordance with the edge of the Lavas; hence the division of the state (Hyderabad) into Marathwada and Telangana, is a rare instance of official recognition of regionalism."¹

It may be stated at once that these cultural and linguistic zones have very often defied and survived political history. As Spate has shown, there was a tendency throughout Indian History, for political boundaries to coincide with nuclear regions, yet, they never always did.

But whenever they have coincided in the history of these zones, we see a fine flowering and consolidation of the cultural forces. For example, under the aegis of the Eastern Chalukyan dynasty, that ruled a major part of the Andhra for four centuries, the latent geographic forces have helped the assertion of its individuality. This manifested itself in the unmistakable appearance of the Telugu language in the records of the 8th century and by 11th century, it assumed the status of a literature. This consolidated the cultural homogeneity of Andhra.

II

THE UNITY OF INDIA*

K. S. SHELVANKAR

THE UNITY OF A PRE-CAPITALIST CULTURE

As many Hindu writers have pointed out, the concept of the fundamental unity of India is an important element in the Hindu heritage.

But this religious and, as it were, ideological unity-fostering the love of the land "as a sacrament of a culture which it embodies"—was based on the minute social differentiation that goes by the name of caste. This is a system that can be related to no coherent idea, not even perhaps least of all—to what is stated in the Hindu scriptures to be its true foundation. It represents actually a confusion of all manner of distinctions, racial and occupational. The one thing that can be said about it with certainty is that it segregates the castes by forbidding intermarriage and restricts each caste to a particular vocation. It implies not only the negation of equality but the organisation of inequality exclusively on the basis of inheritance. Differences there will be in any imaginable society—differences of function, at all events. It is not in recognising their inevitability that caste is peculiar : it is in the method it adopts to systematise and control them. You are a brahmin (priest) because your father was a brahmin ; or a butcher or scavenger, weaver or washer man, for the same reason. Birth is all.

What is more, the system was clothed with all the sanctions of religion. Indeed, it was the Hindu religion and this massive and complex social structure which was declared to be rooted in the eternal order of things. And Hinduism asked of the ordinary individual not so much the acceptance of any precise intellectual or mystical dogma, but rather that he should adapt himself to the social position in which he was born, i.e. his place in the caste hierarchy—and be diligent in his observance of the traditional duties and restrictions it imposed on him. "Each caste and sub-caste was a separate centre with its own particular interests of various kinds, with its own stray likes and dislikes, with its rigid wall that hindered all real

*Reproduced from *The Problem of India*, by K. S. Shelvankar, pp. 19-23.

and practical identification with the interests and likes of other castes and with the wider self of the body-politic."

Thus while Hinduism unified India, it obstructed the further development of unity by upholding on religious grounds a social system composed of bits and pieces, of interlocked fragments, like a Chinese puzzle. The obstruction might have been broken down if economic development had demanded it. But the economic system was stabilised at a low level. It was based on the village community which was a more or less self-sufficient unit, combining agriculture and handicrafts. Production was everywhere on a small-scale, and for consumption rather than exchange. Technology was backward, communications were poor, money was scarcely needed, and every thing moved in narrow, well-worn grooves fixed by custom. It was, in short, a pre-capitalist economic system parochial, static and, in many respects, primitive. There was indeed, a market of varying dimensions for different commodities ; but it was not a self-expanding dynamic market binding together the whole country, or even any very large areas of it, in a process of continuous and vital commodity exchange.

In these circumstances the emergence of a political organisation identifying an "Indian nation" with an "Indian State" was naturally out of the question. Frontiers fluctuated from time to time, dynasties rose and fell, wars and invasions ravaged some part of the land or other. But they left the life of the people largely unaffected, for it was governed ultimately not by the laws of the State but by caste codes of function and privilege, by caste organisation, and by virtually autonomous bodies such as the local guilds and village communes.

Secondly, as a result of military disturbances and calamities like floods and famines, the fabric of caste was shaken and re-shaken, and progressively lost whatever element of rationality it ever had. In the realms of politics and military affairs it played little or no part ; individuals frequently broke through its bonds ; new castes were formed ; but in all essentials the system nevertheless remained unchanged. Thirdly, since no social or economic regime is absolutely static, new cultural, linguistic and sectarian groups and sub-groups arose in different regions of India : partial crystallisations, as it were, within the wide stream of Hindu culture—the Marathas, Tamils, Kashmiris, Gujeratis, Bengalis, the votaries of Siva and of Vishnu, etc., while completely outside the pale of Hinduism but not uninfluenced by it there came into existence religious minorities such as the Moslems and Sikhs.

UNITY AND THE BRITISH CONQUEST

The British conquest initiated and enforced a series of interrelated changes. Each of them by itself would have been revolutionary enough in its consequences, but, occurring simultaneously as they did, they shattered once for all, within the space of a few decades, the foundations of a civilisation that had endured for well nigh three thousand years. There was a new land system, a new revenue system and a new system of administration. Railways were built, trade was encouraged and markets were widened. The transition to a money economy was speeded up. A uniform system of coinage was introduced and the use of money, that most potent dissolvent of ancient ties, was made obligatory. At the same time, law more and more tended to replace the customs which had for so long kept India tethered to her immemorial past.

Underlying and dominating these changes was the political unification of the country. Nationalist writers sometimes argue that this had been achieved in earlier periods of Indian history. There is a grain of truth in the contention but it is not of much importance. For there is an essential, qualitative difference between the unity which enables the Government in India today to exercise at need a direct and immediate control over any village or hamlet in any part of India and the sort of general and in the main nominal overlordship exercised by Asoka or Akbar.

The basis of this unity was threefold. In part it was technological; railways, telegraphs, etc. In part it lay in the character of British power in India: it was not, as in the case of the Turks and Moguls, the power of a body of military adventures acting on their own behalf and, for their personal gain, hence liable to fall out among themselves, but of rulers who were the nominees and agents of a foreign Government—of the highly organised and unified British Government and the capitalist class which supported it. It was made possible, above all, through the disruption, by the various social and economic forces released by the British conquest, of institutions such as caste and the village commune which had formerly barred the road to the political unification of India.

Stated in the broadest terms, the transformation was an episode, one of the major episodes, in the history of capitalism. The break-away from the feudal order welded England into a national state dominated by the capitalist class. The subsequent extension of British power to India was admittedly dictated by economic motives,

by the desire to exploit the trade and industry of India. Exploitation required, and meant in practice, the construction of railways, the re-organisation of the land system, the stimulation of commerce, etc. The direct object of these measures was to increase the profitability of India to British capital, but they inevitably had the effect of destroying the pre-capitalist social and economic systems of the country. They paved the way for the evolution of India on capitalist lines and thereby also created the technological and economic conditions for the attainment of a degree of unity such as they had not known at any period in her history.

INDIAN FEUDALISM*

D. D. KAUSAMBI

Indian feudalism differs so much from its European counterpart, at least, as regards superficial manifestations, that the very existence of feudalism in India has sometimes been denied, except to describe the Muslim and Rajput military hierarchies. The main characteristics of European (specifically English) feudalism may be summarised as follows: (1) "A low level of technique, in which the instruments of production are simple and generally inexpensive, and the act of production is largely individual in character; the division of labour. . . being at a very primitive level of development." This is true of India at all stages, including the pre-feudal. (2) "Production for the immediate need of household or a village-community and not for a wider market." In a broad sense, this is also true here, though increasing commodity production in metals, salt, coconuts, cotton, tambula (pan, Piper betle), areca nuts, and the like has to be noted. (3) "Demesne-farming; on the lords estate often on a considerable scale, by compulsory labour service." This is decidedly not true of India. The manorial system had begun to come into existence only towards the end of the feudal period, in India. The reason was that the Mauryan empire had nothing to correspond to the villas and slave economy of classical Rome. The unit of settlement was the village. It has been shown that its expansion into tribal areas took place in general by far more peaceful methods than under Rome, or Charlemagne, or feudal barons. Nevertheless, the later Indian feudal lords tried always to cultivate some lands directly so as to be independent of the villagers, whose united resistance or failure to produce a crop in bad years might bring disaster to the lord. The armed retainers of the baron had to be assured an independent food supply for emergencies. These seigneurial lands were often cultivated by slaves. Slavery now took on a new importance, though still not indispensable to the means of production. (4) "Political decentralization" is common to both India and Europe, beginning in the period of feudalism from above. The Mauryan theory that all land belongs to the king was reinforced by the tribal concept of land as territory (not property) held in common by the tribe, whose symbol and expression was the chief; this chief would be replaced by the king (Arth. 11.1) or turn into a king, or be converted into a feudal tributary by a conqueror who might at need support the chieftain against his former tribesmen. In time, the functions of the village councils were more and more usurped by the nearest feudal lord. The exception was of villages paying taxes directly to the king. For them, and for their individual land-owners, some separate form of

*Reproduced from *The Study of Indian History*, by D. D. Kausambi, pp.

ownership or tenure-rights were recognised. (5) "Conditional holding of land by lords on some kind of service-tenure." This is particularly noticeable among Rajputs, whose chief profession was of arms ; and among the earlier Muslims, whose chiefs were invaders and who used the common religion to keep themselves, converts included, apart from the rest of the population. The Gangas seem to have been the first to develop it in the south (Ammā 1, 10th century). Later, all lords were required to serve but their jagirs shifted from time to time. It is important to note that the military hierarchy at the centre was not hereditary in general. The emperor would be sole heir to the court-noble whose children might be reduced to penury at the will of the autocrat. The high courtiers might even be slaves. (6) "Possession by a lord of judicial or quasi-judicial functions in relation to the dependent population." This came in part by the lord's sole possession of armed force over the disarmed village, in part from displacement of the older village council. One might trace this back to the Manusmṛti princeling who dispensed justice directly as *raja*, or to Mauryan absolutism in the extensive *śīta* crown lands. Both of these contributed to the development of later feudalism, inevitable as long as the village had no armed force of its own. Three notable characteristics further distinguish Indian from European feudalism ; the increase of slavery, absence of guilds, and the lack of an organized church. Caste replaced both guild and church, being symptom and cause of a more primitive form of production.

The question "who owns the land ?" could not be answered because ownership had totally different meanings under Indian feudalism and the European bourgeois or proto-bourgeois mode. The "lumberdars" held responsible for payment of taxes, soon found it possible to claim ownership rights of the new type, though they had only been representatives of the commune. The answer, therefore, lay in the creation of a new type of guaranteed property in land, essentially bourgeois property under various traditional outward forms. This was not accomplished at one stroke ; but it was done, irrevocably. Later feudal tax-collection had degenerated into plunder of the cultivators, without protection except such little as might derive from their communal solidarity behind ancient custom (FCM 1.378.80). The new revenue settlement resulted in direct assessment and taxation of the owner class whose possession was subject to the same laws as other personal property, and could be transferred by a financial transaction as for trade goods. The rights were maintained by an efficient judiciary and a compact police force, both paid regular salaries, independent of any feudal nobility, with the same powers over all classes of people as regards the law-bourgeois law.

INDIAN FEUDALISM, ITS CHARACTERISTICS

K. S. SHELVANKAR

THE TRIPLE CONFLICT OVER LAND

What Indian agrarian development created was thus a multiplicity of simultaneous and co-ordinate claims on the land. They were broadly of three kinds : the customary claims of the peasants in the village ; the delegated or derivative claims of the intermediary ; and the superior claims of the sovereign. Private property in land, as ordinarily understood, can only arise when this triple claim has been systematised and unified in some form or other. It involves a clarification of the position (a) as between the overlord and the intermediaries as a body ; (b) as between the intermediaries and the village ; (c) among the peasants themselves.

In Western Europe, too, the elements of agrarian history are the same as in India : the villages, more or less collectivist in character, with a real or putative basis in tribal kinship , on top of them a tribal chief whose power, through conquest and other means, is extended over a larger territory and greater numbers ; and the development, based on technical deficiencies and military necessities, of a class of fief-holders, intermediaries, between overlord and village. But owing to the difference in the relations between these constituents of the agrarian scheme, their development led in one case to a definite system of private property, while in the other it did not. .

INDIAN FEUDALISM: ITS CHARACTERISTICS

There were in the main three reasons why agrarian development in India proceeded on different lines.

(1) On the plane of theory, the difference is rooted in different conceptions of monarchical power. The king under European feudalism combined in himself authority over all persons and things in his kingdom. When the king's dominium was delegated under vows of allegiance to a number of barons and fief-holders of different degrees, and a hierarchy of authority was created, the power and the rights that were passed on from superior to inferior were power and rights over things (over the land of a given area) as well as over the persons connected with it.

In India there was nothing analogous to the Roman conception of dominium and the sovereign's power was not, until a late period, regarded as absolute and unlimited over the agricultural land of the

*Reproduced from *The Problem of India*, by K. S. Shelvankar, pp. 96-102, 139-143.

kingdom. The king did not, in theory, create subordinate owners of land because he himself was not in theory the supreme owner of the land. What he delegated to the intermediaries was not even his sovereignty understood in this restricted sense, but only the specific and individual rights of *zamin*, the revenue-collecting power.

Hence there did not occur, as in England, a conflict between the king and his baronage, with the baronage endeavouring to delimit and circumscribe the claims which the king could make upon them in virtue of his exercise of the supreme dominium. The king was not *primus inter pares*; and the baronage were not co-sharers with him of sovereignty. From the beginning they held no more than a fairly well-defined title to the collection of taxes, or rents, and they could escape this condition not by fighting with the king for the clarification and settlement of their mutual relationship—which was precise enough—but by taking up arms against him and, if they were powerful enough, by themselves assuming the insignia of royalty. The conflict between the king and his feudatories did not therefore lead to political and constitutional developments within the framework of the State, but merely to the creation of a new State in no way dissimilar to that from which its ruler had torn himself apart.

(2) In order to resist, when necessary, the overlord's terms or conditions made even on the narrow ground of the *zamin* power, a principle of cohesion was necessary, and that was lacking among the intermediate baronage. They were intermediaries of different grades, different powers, different environments and languages, whose allegiance was never centralised and focused on a single person or institution, and who were, moreover, scattered widely over an immense territory. They could never, as an organised and coherent body, resist a common overlord and impose checks on him, partly because there was no common overlord to whom all of them had sworn allegiance, and partly because they themselves were rent asunder, were scattered and had each a different historical antecedent.

(3) Save in some exceptional cases the intermediary in his relations with the peasantry and the village had no occasion to convert his *zamin* rights into one of *de facto* dominium in the European sense by any attempt directly to influence the course of rural operations. Indian feudalism remained fiscal and military in character, it was not manorial. There was in general none of the intermingling of peasant land with *demesne* land in a common village, nor interdependence for labour services such as marked the manorial system. The peasant was not the lord's serf, nor was the lord directly interested in cultivation. There was therefore nothing similar to the direct conflict between the manorial lord and the peasantry over the disposal and cultivation of the land and of labour services which agitated Europe from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries.

When there was a conflict, it was over the share of the agricultural produce to be retained by the peasant or surrendered to the lord. The foundations of agriculture themselves were not affected. Nor was there any such widespread and general rise in prices or the temptation of greater income by turning arable into pasture, to lead the baronage to assert their power in a manner capable of introducing fundamental changes in the rural economy. Even as late as the eighteenth century there was an abundance of land, and the hard-pressed peasant could always abscond on the open plains of the Ganges. The lord therefore was in general satisfied to exact his utmost from the peasant in the shape of produce, without concerning himself with economic and technical questions of increasing production. . . .

There was no security or safeguard for a right against the State, as critics sometimes observe, for the simple reason that the right was in fact and manifestly a concession of the State, a delegation of its political revenue collecting power. But this applies only to the non-cultivating classes. As for the village and the peasantry, they had strictly neither rights nor safeguards—except such as were grounded in custom. They tilled the land not because it was a right or a duty, but because it was the matter of their fathers. And no one was foolish enough to try to evict them, because there was plenty of other land to which they could go. What their masters wanted was not the peasant's land, but his surplus value.

None of the major conflicts in Indian history had for its object the exercise of rights over the village. They were conflicts between overlords of various grades for the right or power to get a payment from the peasant, not to seize his land. European history, on the contrary, reveals a conflict between the peasantry and the manorial lords because the latter not only demanded a share of the produce, but desired to retain a particular method of cultivation—by forced labour—or to introduce new methods of cultivation (enclosures, large-scale farming). The Indian conflict was one between lords who were concerned not at all with methods of cultivation, but only to draw an income from the peasantry. If all ownership of land rests ultimately either on the claim of the sword or the claim of the plough, the issue in India was never fought out between the claimants of the plough and the claimants of the sword. The issue was always between different claimants of the sword, the village and the peasantry remaining throughout the passive subject of conflict, the booty over which the rival powers fought each other. . . .

THE CAUSE OF FRUSTRATION

This frustration, this incapacity to outgrow itself which weighed down the productive system of India, may be explained, to begin with, in terms of the village community.

Owing to the direct combination of domestic industry and agriculture that it represented, and the resultant economies, the village was able to preserve its equilibrium and offer the strongest resistance to disruptive influences. The manor, it is true, was in some respects similar to the Indian village, but it was a less stable organisation. It was based on serfdom and ruled over by a feudal baron; and to serf and baron alike the development of urban trade and industry held out advantages, either of personal freedom or pecuniary gain. Hence, when these forces came into play, the manor succumbed, not perhaps without a struggle, but in a comparatively short period.

The village, on the other hand, which had in general no room either for serfdom or baronial exploitation, was the more firmly articulated in its inner structure and therefore succeeded, where the manor had failed in maintaining its distinctive character. When we consider that, in the nineteenth century, it withstood the assault even of mass-produced goods—"which are everywhere perforated by the dead expenses of their process of circulation"—and broke down finally under the cumulative pressure of political and economic changes, we cannot be surprised at the tenacity it displayed for so long.

The dogged resistance of the village is, however, only a part of the explanation. We must take into account also the political and social weakness of the Indian bourgeoisie, a weakness of which the most striking proof is the absence in Indian history of anything comparable to the town economy of the European Middle Ages.

"During this period the whole of the commercial and industrial life of the time was concentrated in, and indeed confined to, the towns; was controlled, assisted and limited by municipal regulations. . . . The policy of self-interest pursued by the towns was directed not only against burgesses of other towns, but also in relation to the inhabitants of the surrounding agricultural areas. . . . Every town expected to obtain for its own consumption the surplus food grown in the country around, and sought to prevent the rustics from engaging in any industry which could compete with its own manufactures". . . .

In India, too, there were guilds—craft as well as trade guilds. (Something like a loose federation of trade guilds existed in South India for many centuries. . . .

It is certain, in any case, that the merchants and handicraftsmen, the bourgeoisie as a class organised in its guilds, never attained the ascendancy that its European counterpart won for itself when it seized political power in the towns. In India the town was nearly always an outpost of the territorial State, governed by prefects or boards appointed from the centre.

Why, it will be asked, did the European bourgeoisie overcome this obstacle? Why did they triumph over the State machine, driving it out of or assimilating it into the towns? The answer takes us to the heart of the question. There was an essential difference in the interrelations which prevailed in Europe and India between the State, town and country. For the agrarian system of India, public works and irrigation works were a necessity. It could only be met by an organisation with the resources and the authority of the State. And to control, regulate and supervise public works, and the collection of the land-tax, the State was compelled to station its agents at the various local centres, which were the towns.

Feudal Europe also was an agrarian society, perhaps more completely so than India. But irrigation and irrigation works were of negligible importance; and the towns, such as they were, were primarily fortresses and judicial and administrative centres: they were not vitally related to the productive organism. The capture of these keypoints by industrial and commercial interests divorced from agriculture did not, accordingly, present any threat to the stability of rural production. (Actually, it served as a stimulus). In Indian conditions, however, where it would have presented such a threat, the State, whose fortunes were bound up with the land, never relaxed its hold on the towns which were the bases of its action.

That is why commerce and guilds and towns—if we leave aside the circumstances of their origin at an early and obscure period—had no revolutionary significance in India: they did not bring about a new division of labour between town and country, concentrating industry and trade in one and agriculture in the other. That is why, again, although not only administrative but geographical, military, strategic and religious factors helped to determine the character of the towns, few of them derived their importance exclusively from trade and industry.

It was the existence of the town and of an urban population requiring goods and services, which drew trade and industry towards it. And the Indian bourgeoisie, lacking the means to break down the opposition of the village and turn the countryside into its market, as the European bourgeoisie had been able to do, had perforce to submit to this situation and resign itself to playing a subordinate role to the courts and noblemen, the soldiers, officials, priests and pilgrims, who collectively constituted the consumer class and who were in possession of the towns. It was in the main their wealth that the Indian bourgeoisie tried to tap. . . .

For these reasons—the invincible toughness of the village and the political impotence of the bourgeoisie—the evolution of Indian economy was inhibited and the spontaneous emergence of a capitalist order was rendered impossible.

DEMARCATON OF AGRARIAN REGIONS OF INDIA : SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY*

DANIEL THORNER

By reducing the number of States in India and increasing their average size, the States Reorganization of 1956 has invited fresh attempts at demarcating the economic regions of India. Prior to 1956 efforts to differentiate regions came up against the dilemma of running counter either to economic considerations or to administrative considerations. The helter-skelter juxtaposition of State boundaries, especially in the case of the smaller units, made it difficult to devise analytically valid regions which could be equated with or confined within the individual States. In indicating regional groupings, therefore, the Census of 1951, the Rural Credit Survey, and various studies by individual scholars cut repeatedly across state lines.¹

From the point of view of administrative policy and action, however, the individual States have been continually hungry for economic data presented according to State lines. In response to this pressure, students of regional variations have felt compelled to furnish such data, even while noting, for example, that "averaging of the data for the State as a whole may give results which may not be very meaningful for the purposes of inter-regional comparisons."²

Study of the map of India since the State Reorganization of 1956 indicates that it may perhaps now be possible both to take due account of socio-economic factors and at the same time to respect State boundaries. We must, of course, bear in mind the severe qualifications to which all efforts at the regionalization of India remain subject.³ In very rough terms we may suggest that the following nine States form sufficiently distinctive areas for each of them to be considered as a

* This is an extract from a revised version of my article "Demarcation of Agrarian Regions of India : Some Preliminary Notes," originally published in the Seminar Series, Vol. I, of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, *Rationale of Regional Variations in Agrarian Structure of India* (Bombay, 1957), pp. 46-67.

¹ See the maps printed in my article, "Demarcation of Agrarian Regions of India," *Rationale of Regional Variations*, pp. 49-52.

² M. L. Dantwala, "Regional Variations in Agricultural Employment and Wages," *Rationale of Regional Variations*, op. cit., p. 98.

³ Cf., O.H.K. Spate, *India and Pakistan : A General and Regional Geography*, 2nd Edition (London, 1957), Ch. XIII, "The Regions of the Sub-Continent," esp. at pp. 353-54.

separate region : Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Punjab, Kashmir, Rajasthan, Kerala, Mysore, and Madras. Four other States may best be considered as composed of two major regions each : Uttar Pradesh (West U.P. and Central-and-Eastern-U.P.), Bihar (North Bihar and South Bihar), Andhra Pradesh (Coastal Andhra and Inland Andhra), and Madhya Pradesh (Chhattisgarh and Malwa-Bundelkhand). Bombay, India's largest State, would appear to be the most varied and, at a minimum, should be considered in terms of three regions : Gujarat-Saurashtra, Bombay Deccan plus Berar-Nagpur, and Konkan. In this way we obtain a total of twenty broad economic regions which may be listed as follows :

STATE		REGIONS
ANDHRA	...	Coastal Andhra Inland Andhra
ASSAM	...	Assam
BIHAR	...	North Bihar South Bihar
BOMBAY	...	Gujarat-Saurashtra Berar-Deccan Konkan
JAMMU and KASHMIR	...	Jammu and Kashmir
KERALA	...	Kerala
MADHYA PRADESH	...	Malwa-Bundelkhand Chhattisgarh
MADRAS	...	Madras
MYSORE	...	Mysore
ORISSA	...	Orissa
PUNJAB	...	Punjab
RAJASTHAN	...	Rajasthan
UTTAR PRADESH	...	Western Uttar Pradesh Central and Eastern Uttar Pradesh
WEST BENGAL	...	West Bengal

The reader may rightly ask, what are the criteria which have been used to demarcate these twenty regions. Before answering this, I should like to direct attention to the broad agreement which has been reached in three previous efforts to demarcate the regions of India : the Census of 1951, the Reserve Bank's Rural Credit Survey, and the study by Dr. Chen Han-seng, *Agrarian Regions of India and Pakistan*. This agreement, it should be noted, has been reached despite the employment of somewhat diverse criteria. The Census of 1951 divided the country into five regions and fifteen sub-regions on the basis of topography, soil and rainfall.⁴ The Rural Credit Survey sponsored by the

⁴ Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, India : Part I-A, Report (Delhi, 1953), p. xi.

Reserve Bank of India in 1951-52 grouped its seventy-five districts into thirteen regions "on the basis of certain considerations of contiguity and of similarity of physical, climatic or other natural and demographic conditions."⁵ Dr. Chen Han-seng, in his as yet unpublished monograph on the *Agrarian Regions of India and Pakistan*, prepared in 1948-50, used five criteria to separate India into sixteen regions. He has set forth his criteria as follows: "topographical situation, agricultural water supply (both rainfall and irrigation), crop system, land system, and general economic development."⁶ The accompanying chart shows the striking similarity of the three sets of regions.

<i>Rural Credit Survey</i>	<i>Dr. Chen Han-seng</i>	<i>Census of 1951</i>
Assam—Bengal	Assam	Eastern Himalayan
Bihar—Bengal	North Bihar	Lower Gangetic Plains
	W. Bengal—S. Bihar	" " "
Eastern Uttar Pradesh	East U.P.	" " "
Western Uttar Pradesh	West U.P.	Upper Gangetic Plains
Punjab—PEPSU	Punjab	Trans—Gangetic Plains
		Western Himalayan
Rajasthan	Rajputana	The Desert
		North West Hills
Central India	North Madhya Pradesh and Vindhya Pradesh	North Central Hills and Plateau
Orissa and E. Madhya Pradesh	S.E. Madhya Pradesh and Orissa	N.E. Plateau
Western Cotton Region	Gujarat—Khandesh	Gujarat—Kathiawar
North Deccan	Maratha Region	North Deccan
South Deccan	Southern Deccan	South Deccan
East Coast	Northeast Madras	North Madras and Orissa Coastal
" "	Tamil Region	South Madras
West Coast	Malabar Coast	Malabar—Konkan
" "	Konkan	

The set of twenty regions which I have presented above is quite consonant with the basic regions of the 1951 Census, the Rural Credit Survey, and Dr. Chen's study. There are only two noteworthy changes that I have introduced. The first is in the eastern tract comprising Bengal-Bihar-Chhota Nagpur-Orissa, which is not treated exactly alike in any two of the above studies. My procedure has been to separate Chhattisgarh as a region from the rest of Madhya Pradesh; to treat

⁵ All-India Rural Credit Survey, Vol. I, *The Survey Report: Part 1 (Rural Families)* (Bombay, 1956), p. 11.

⁶ *Agrarian Regions of India and Pakistan*, (Philadelphia, 1950—ms.), p. ii.

North Bihar and South Bihar as two distinct regions ; and to consider West Bengal and Orissa each as a region.

The second important change that I have made relates to Mysore and Andhra. I have taken the whole of the new Mysore State as a region, but have considered coastal Andhra as a separate region distinct from inland Andhra. It should be stressed that the demarcation of these twenty regions is highly provisional and subject to modification.

The criteria which I am using have been determined by the nature of my interest in the regional analysis of India. This centers on the classic agrarian problem, namely, the interrelation of the institutional framework on the one hand, with the level of output and the distribution of the product on the other

Accordingly, I have been attempting to make use of the following seven criteria :

1. Socio-economic systems (e.g.—tribal ways of life such as we find in Assam or Chhattisgarh ; settled agriculture carried on primarily by subsistence-oriented peasant households as prevalent in the villages of Coastal Orissa or Rayalaseema ; cash-crop farming as typified by sugar-cane producers of Meerut or cotton-growers of Berar).
2. Types of landholding and concentration of control.
3. Labour supply: family labour, unfree labour, free labour.
4. Control of credit, marketing, processing, shopkeeping.
5. Geographic factors: topography, soil, climate, water supply and drainage.
6. Crop patterns and cultivation units.
7. Overall degree of modernization: industrialization, urbanization, population growth.

The value of these regions for purposes of analysis will have to be tested by trial breakdowns of the available empirical data. If the boundaries have been defined appropriately, the variations within a given region, in terms of these criteria, should be less than the variations from the given region to the neighbouring regions.

A number of these regions, it will be noted, are very large, both in area and in population. Madras, for example, although much reduced from its former size and diversity, still extends to some 50,000 square miles in which live about 30 million people. Others, such as Assam, Punjab, or Western Uttar Pradesh include hill districts with characteristics of their own.

The existence of these important differences within some of our major regions suggests the need for a more detailed regional breakdown. Consequently, taking as my point of departure the twenty regions listed above, I have prepared a second set of forty divisions. Four of these divisions refer to India's metropolitan areas or, more pedantically, the "conurbations" of Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, and Madras.

Seven of the divisions represent areas taken over intact from our previous list; these include the States of Kerala and Kashmir, and five regions: Coastal Andhra, North Bihar, Gujarat-Saurashtra, Konkan, and Chhattisgarh. There has not seemed to me to be sufficient reason for dividing further any of these.

The principal innovation has been with respect to the thirteen remaining regions of my original list. Ten of these regions have been split into two divisions each, while three of our largest regions—Rajasthan, Mysore, and Malwa-Bundelkhand—have been broken into three divisions each.

The present scheme can be summed up as a two-stage breakdown with 20 major regions each consisting of a single State or a part of a State, and 40 divisions (4 urban and 36 overwhelmingly rural), each constituting a region or a part of a region. In order to indicate more precisely the territorial extent of these regions and divisions, I have specified the districts assigned to each division in the chart given below.

I should like, in conclusion, to emphasize that the entire scheme is tentative and preliminary in nature, and is put forward primarily to elicit criticism from other research workers.

REGIONS/DIVISIONS

DISTRICTS IN EACH DIVISION

Coastal Andhra

Coastal Andhra

.. Srikakulam, Vishakapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Nellore.

Inland Andhra

Telengana

... Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Medak, Warangal, Khammam, Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Hyderabad.

Rayalaseema

... Kurnool, Anantapur, Cuddapah, Chittoor.

Assam

- | | | |
|--------------|-----|--|
| Assam Hills | . | All Hill and Frontier districts, including N.E.F.A. and Manipur and Tripura. |
| Assam Valley | ... | Cachar, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, and Lakhimpur. |

North Bihar

- | | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| North Bihar | | Saran, Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Darbhanga, Saharsa, Purnea, Monghyr <i>North</i> . |
|-------------|--|---|

South Bihar

- | | | |
|---------------|-----|--|
| South Bihar | . | Shahabad, Patna, Gaya, Bhagalpur, Monghyr <i>South</i> . |
| Chhota Nagpur | ... | Palamau, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Santhal Parganas, Ranchi, Singhbhum. |

Gujarat-Saurashtra

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----|--|
| Gujarat-Saurashtra | ... | Kutch, Banaskantha, Mehsana, Sabarkantha, Jhalawar, Halar, Madhya Saurashtra, Sorath, Amreli, Gohilwad, Ahmedabad, Kaira, Panch Mahals, Baroda, Broach, Surat. |
|--------------------|-----|--|

Berar-Deccan

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--|
| Khandesh-Berar | ... | West Khandesh, East Khandesh, Dangs, Buldana, Akola, Amraoti, Yeotmal, Nagpur, Wardha, Bhandara, Chanda. |
| Bombay Deccan (including Marathwada) | ... | Nasik, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Nanded, Ahmednagar, Bhir, Poona, Osmanabad, Satara North, Satara South, Sholapur, Kolhapur. |

Konkan

- | | | |
|----------------|-----|---------------------------|
| Konkan | .. | Thana, Kolaba, Ratnagiri. |
| Greater Bombay | ... | Greater Bombay. |

Jammu and Kashmir

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----|----------------|
| Jammu and Kashmir | ... | All districts. |
|-------------------|-----|----------------|

Kerala

- Kerala ... Malabar, Trichur, Kottayam, Quilon, Trivandrum.

Malwa-Bundelkhand

- Malwa-Nimar ... Mandasaur, Rajgarh, Ratlam, Ujjain, Shajapur, Jhabua, Dhar, Dewas, Indore, Nimar-I, Nimar-II.
- Gwalior-Bundelkhand .. Morena, Bhind, Gwalior, Shivpuri, Datia, Guna, Tikamgarh, Chhattarpur, Panna, Satna, Rewa.
- Narmada ... Bhilsa, Sehore, Raisen, Saugor, Damoh, Jabalpur, Hoshungabad, Betul, Narsinghpur, Seoni, Mandla, Chhindwara.

Chhattisgarh

- Chhattisgarh-Baghelkhand .. Sidhi, Shahdol, Surguja, Bilaspur, Raigarh, Balaghat, Durg, Raipur, Bastar.

Madras

- Coromandel Coast ... Chingleput, South Arcot, Pondicherry, Tanjore, Ramnad, Tinnevely, Kanniyakumari.
- Inland Madras ... North Arcot, Salem, Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Tiruchirapalli, Madura.
- Madras City ... Madras City.

Mysore

- North Karnatak ... Bidar, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwar, Raichur, Bellary.
- Mysore ... Shimoga, Chitaldrug, Chickmagalur, Hassan, Tumkur, Bangalore, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore.
- Kanara-Coorg ... Kanara, South Kanara, Coorg.

Orissa

- Coastal Orissa ... Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam.
- Inland Orissa ... Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Bolangir, Phulbani, Dhenkanal, Kalahandi, Koraput.

Punjab

- Punjab Hills-Himachal ... Kangra, Simla, Chamba, Mandi, Sirmoor, Mahasu, and Bilaspur.
- Punjab Plains ... Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Jullundur, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Bhatinda, Sangrur, Patiala, Ambala, Hissar, Karnal, Rohtak, Gurgaon, Mohindergarh.
- Delhi State ... Delhi State.

Rajasthan

- Jodhpur-Bikaner ... Ganganagar, Bikaner, Churu, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Nagore, Barmer, Jalore, Pali
- Jaipur-Ajmer ... Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Ajmer, Tonk, Sawaimadhopur.
- Mewar-Kotah ... Bhilwara, Kotah, Bundi, Jhalawar, Chittorgarh, Sirohi, Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara.

Western Uttar Pradesh

- Kumaon-Garhwal ... Garhwal, Tehri-Garhwal, Nainital Almora, Dehra Dun.
- Meerut-Agra-Rohilkhand ... Saharanpur, Bareilly, Bijnor, Pilibhit, Rampur, Kheri, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Mathura, Agra, Mainpuri, Etah, Budaun, Moradabad, Shahjahanpur, Etawah, Farrukhabad.

Central and Eastern Uttar Pradesh

- Oudh-Jhansi ... Sitapur, Hardoi, Bara Banki, Lucknow, Kanpur Unao, Rai-Bareli, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Fatehpur, Banda, Jhansi, Pratapgarh, Allahabad, Sultanpur, Faizabad.
- Banaras-Gorakhpur ... Bahraich, Gonda, Basti, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Azamgarh, Ballia, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Banaras, Mirzapur.

West Bengal

Darjeeling-Duars

Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar,
(SIKKIM).

Lower Bengal

West Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad,
Birbhum, Purulia, Bankura, Burd-
wan, Nadia, Hooghly, Midnapore,
24-Parganas.

Calcutta

Calcutta-Howrah-Chandernagore.

SECTION III

**INDIAN VILLAGE COMMUNITY -
ITS HISTORY AND TYPES**

I

TEACHINGS OF HISTORY*

A. S. ALTEKAR

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES NOT UNCHANGING

Having discussed and stated the peculiarly Western features, we proceed to consider the lessons of the history we have so far narrated.

(1) Our history shows that the observations made by early writers like Metcalfe and Maine about Indian village communities being unchanging have to be accepted with great reservations. (a) the difference between the Western and Northern communities that were pointed out in the last section were all due to the fact that the communities in the North had changed owing to the factors that were not operating in Western India. (b) Since the days of Elphinstone and Metcalfe, we have actually noticed before our very eyes how most of the village institutions that excited their admiration have gone into oblivion. So the myth of these communities remaining unchanged must be given up. (c) Nor can it be maintained that leaving apart from considera-

*Reproduced from *Village Communities in Western India*, by A. S. Altekar, pp. 124-127.

tion the changes introduced by the Moslem and British influences, there were no changes taking place in the Hindu period. For, we have seen how the influence of the Vedic Sabha dwindled down in the Brahmanic age, how under the Maurya Imperialism, the jurisdiction of the local council and Panchayat was considerably curtailed, how '*lekhaka*' or the accountant did not exist in earlier times but came into existence subsequently, how the regular council of elders was not in existence down to the Valabhi period and so on. To conclude, history shows us that both internal and external forces have been working out changes in our village communities. The Mohamedan influence was not powerful enough, so the institutions continued to exist but their growth was arrested and efficiency weakened; the British influence, dominant and all-sided, has all but killed most of the village institutions. The headman has lost his importance, the accountant has ceased to be hereditary, the village council no longer exists, the Panchayat is never heard of, the village fund has also vanished. Village life to a great extent remains the same, people still till their lands and sow their crops in the old manner; but even here changes are coming and coming fast enough. The theory therefore that the Indian village communities do not change is completely disproved by the teachings of history.....

COMMUNITIES, NOT REPUBLICS

(2) Similarly, our history shows us that our village communities were never in historic times republics as Metcalfe had thought. In the Vedic times it appears probable enough that each village community was independent republic, but throughout the historic period, the community was always subordinate to and a constituent of larger political units. In the Jataka period, we have seen how the taxes and serious criminals were sent to the Central Government; the Maurya period need not be even considered; for, it was an age of imperialism par excellence; but even under the Valabhi, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta and Yadava kings, the village was a regular unit of the State and no republic. The fixed order of officials invariably mentioned in the grants shows that there was a real control from the Central Government. Were the villages republics, the grants would have been addressed only to the Gramakutas; they mention the Rashtrakutas and Vishayapatis obviously because these district and divisional officers were exercising a general supervision and control over the village administration. The Smritis also mention how the headman was to report serious cases to the officer over ten villages, the latter to the officer over twenty villages and so on and Sukraniti enjoins the king to inspect his villages.

We have also shown how the amount of the land revenue varied with the needs or whims of the Central Government. The defence

arrangements of the community were supplemented by the police and military departments of the Central Government. The same was the case with regard to the public works where help from the Central Government in one form or another was often forthcoming. To call the village communities then as small independent republics, is hardly what the facts would justify.

COMMUNITIES NOT DEMOCRATIC, BUT SELF-GOVERNING

(3) The word republic again is very unfortunate; it conveys notions of democracy, of equal rights, of general election and so on. Nothing of the kind took place in our village communities. There was no idea of equality.

We in modern days should never forget that democratic notions were never prevalent in our village communities.

II

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN INDIA : A HISTORICAL OUTLINE*

H. D. MALAVIYA

COLLECTIVIST APPROACH TO PROBLEMS : THE LOCAL BODIES

The Vedas, and specially the Rig-Veda, signify a collectivist approach to all problems. Of special significance in this connection would be the last Sukta of the last (10th) Mandala of Rig-Veda. In this hymn Rishi Angiras offers his prayer to the deity called Samaj-nana or Samjnana. The erudite commentator on the Rig-Veda, Sayana-charya, explains this term as signifying the collective, general and national consciousness of an entire people, the political consciousness which is spread evenly (Sambhavana) among all the classes, making up the total population of the country. Commenting upon this hymn, Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji says that the deity worshipped here "may be called the deity of democracy." The assembly is conceived as "a united body." And further: "It stands for equal right and liberties of all its members as the common assembly of the whole people, so that there should be a sense of liberty, equality and fraternity in the minds of all."

In his pre-eminent study Hindu Polity, Dr. K. P. Jayaswal says that "national life and activities in the earliest times on record were expressed through popular assemblies and institutions." Such gatherings are referred to as Samiti (Sam+Iti) meaning "meeting together." That such bodies existed at all levels is indicated in Prithvi-Sukta (56) of Atharva-Veda. "In the villages and forests of the lands, in the various meetings and assemblies to discuss problems, I should always, O Mother Earth, speak for your good, for your interests." That even at this time India had come to be a nation of diverse peoples with different languages and religions, and that the sense of unity in this diversity had developed, is made abundantly clear by Prithvi-Sukta (45): "This land which holds within its bosom men of diverse languages and religions as though they are people living in one household, should like, a milch cow, profusely give us wealth and riches". . . .

Vedic society was, indeed, sufficiently developed and settled to admit of an elaborate differentiation of functions. As Dr. Mookerji has listed, the original texts use a number of terms to designate these

*Reproduced from *Village Panchayats in India*, by H. D. Malaviya, pp. 43-89.

popular local bodies, viz. kula, gana, jati, puga, vrata, sreni, sangha, samudaya, samuha, sambhuya-samutthana, parishad, Charana. . . .

THE ANCIENT INDIAN VILLAGE : THE GRAMANI AND OTHER OFFICIALS

What actually was the village in ancient times and who were its officials ? Valmiki Ramayana mentions of two types of villages, the Ghosh and the Gram, the former being smaller than the latter. Its officials were called Ghosh-Mahattar and Gram-Mahattar. The Ramayana also mentions Gramani as another village official. He was no doubt a highly respected man, so much so that when Rama killed Ravana, the happy gods, in singing praises to him, compared him to a general and a Gramani. The Mahabharata also mentions of Ghosh and Gram. Ghoshes are indicated as being smaller in size, generally situated near forests where dwelt the Gops, that is, those people who maintained cow-herds. Manu calls the village official by the name of Gramik. He says that the maladjustments in the village should be reported by the Gramik to the next higher official, the one over ten villages. This Gramik was thus responsible for the village administration, and Manu has indicated his functions as collection of the king's dues from the village inhabitants. The next higher official, the one in charge of the administration of ten villages, to whom the Gramik had to report, was called Dashi. This man had to report to another official responsible for twenty villages, called Vishanti. Over him used to be an official responsible for a hundred villages (called Shati or Shat-Gramadhipati), and above him was yet another over one thousand villages, called Sahasra-Gramadhipati.

VILLAGE CONTROL OVER THE GRAMANI

The appointment of the Gramani by the king should not, however, be taken to mean that he was a superimposition from above and could do as he liked in the villages. On the contrary, he had to work strictly under the advice of the Village Elders, the Gram Vridhas, who were chosen by an assembly of the village. Dr. Altekar is very specific on the point. He says that these Gramanis, who he explains as the village Mukhiyas (a class in our villages which continued even through the British period, bereft, of course, of all the glory and functions of the past), and the village scribe, the record-keeper (like our patwaris, patels, kulkarnis, etc. of the day), "could not act as they like. They had to work in accordance with the advice of the Gram Vridhas. These have functioned from the earliest times as a non-official body. The Mukhiya was the executive authority, but if he ever acted against the customary practices, the Gram Vridhas used to correct him."

FUNCTIONS OF THE VILLAGE PANCHAYAT AND THE GRAMANI

In the Gramani, it would appear, the relationship which developed between the State and the people found an exact expression. He was like father and mother to the village folk, and "though responsible to the State, he was essentially a man of the people and used to be ever ready to protect their interests. He was as necessary for the State as for the people. "The first duty of the Gramani was to look after village defence and he headed the crops of volunteers and guardsmen organised for the purpose. His second task was to realise the State dues and keep records of the realisations. All important papers used to be under his direct charge, and the village body of elders, as also the entire village community, co-operated with him in this task. There may have been some other functions of the Gramani, but these are the most important and significant among them, apart from the judicial ones.

JUSTICE IN THE VILLAGE

The judicial functions in Rama' court, as also in the courts of all the long line of kings that preceded him, it should be borne in mind, were essentially of the appellate type, the administration of justice being primarily the task of the *ganas*, *kulas*, etc. that is, the bodies at the village level, Mahabharata (Shanti Parva) says that in *ganas*, "criminal justice should be administered promptly and by men learned in law, through the president." In Shanti Parva, Bhishma tells Yudhishtira at length about these bodies, which denotes for them a period of existence and functioning before the rise of kingship. In course of time, when the customs and usages of these bodies had developed and taken roots, they entered into confederations and the institution of kingship came into being and these bodies came to owe allegiance to it. Their laws were, however, held in the highest respect in the courts of the kings, and appeals against the decisions of the village bodies were decided in accordance with current customs and practices. The kings of themselves imposed or promulgated no laws of their own, from which the obvious implication is that the laws of the *ganas* were quite comprehensive. K. P. Jayaswal points out that these laws of the *ganas* were called *Samaya*. "Samaya, literally, means a decision or a resolution arrived at in an assembly, that is, the laws of the *ganas* were passed in their meetings."

INDIAN VILLAGES IN BUDDHIST TIMES

Indeed, glimpses of the agricultural system and references to the self-governing village communities are scattered all through Jain and Buddhist texts dating from 5th century B.C. The canonical books of the Buddhists elaborately refer to the arrangement of villages, towns and forts. *Gama*, *nigama*, *kula* and *nagaraka* are often men-

tioned. The Jain texts refer to settlements such as Ghosa, Kheta, Kharvata, Gram, palli, pattana, samvaha, uagara, matamba, etc. The average village contemplated in the Buddhist Jatakas consisted of families numbering upto 1,000. The village dwellings were fairly close to one another, so much so that a fire starting in one might spread to the whole village. The villages almost invariably had a gate, the gram-dwara. Beyond this used to be the village orchard, and then the gram-kshetra, that is the cultivated area of the village. Fences, snares and field-watchmen protected the crops from pests, beasts and birds. The gram-kshetra was extended, as and when need arose, by cleaning the forest. Beyond this arable area used to be the village pasture, which was invariably held in common, and the cattle of the king or the commoner, all had equal rights over it. The jatakas refer to Gopalaka (meaning "protector of the flocks") a village official or employee, a sort of a common communal neatherd whose task was to pen the flocks at night or, in the alternative, return it to their owners by counting heads.

The cultivated area of the village consisted of individual holdings. It would appear that the demarcation of areas was done in a well-planned manner. There seems to have obtained a system of co-operative irrigation and the water channels divided the holdings. Rhys-Davids has also observed that the irrigation channels were laid by the community, the rows of boundaries were in fact the water channels and the supply of water was regulated by rule, under the supervision of the headman.

SYSTEM OF LANDHOLDINGS AND VILLAGE ORGANISATION : THE COMMUNAL CONCEPT

The communal concept was even more pronounced in the case of the village common—the grasslands and the forests. Grazing rights and the right to pick up fallen wood was free and unfettered. As Rhys-Davids had remarked : "No individual could acquire, either by purchase or inheritance, any exclusive right in any portion of the common grassland or wood land. Great importance was attached to these rights of pasture and forestry. Even when the king made a grant of some village to some priest, or some other dignitary, in effect it was not a conferment of free rights over village lands."

MAURYA PERIOD: KAUTILYA'S ARTHA-SHASTRA

Kautilya said that village boundaries should be demarcated by river, hill, forest, ditches, tanks, bunds and trees of various descriptions. Further, the villages should be situated at distances of one or two Kroscha (1 Kroscha=2 miles) so that in times of need one village may go to the help of another. The villages were organised under unions of 10 called Samgrahana, of 200 called Karvatika, of 400 call-

ed Dronamukha, and of 800 villages constituting a Mahagrama, and administratively termed Sthattu (from whence probably come the modern term Thana, that is the jurisdiction of a Police Station). The Sthattu then, as now, was a centre of trade and fairs of the neighbourhood villages.

THE VILLAGES: ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: RULES FOR AGRICULTURAL PROMOTION

The village administrative staff comprised (i) the Adhyaksha (i.e. the Headman); (ii) the Samkhayaka (i.e. the Accountant); (iii) the Sthanikas (Village officials of different grades); (iv) Anikasta (Veterinary doctors); (v) Jamgha Karika (Village couriers). Besides these, there used to be an officer to look after village sanitation (Chikitsaka) and a horse-trainer (Ashwa-Damak) with a view to build up a cavalry for needs of war. These were granted land free of rents and taxes, but they were forbidden to alienate it by sale or mortgage.

In Chandragupta's time, the villages were divided into three categories according to their population: Jyeshtha or the biggest one, Madhyama or the middling ones, and Kanishtha or the smaller ones. These, in turn, were divided into four categories for purposes of State revenue, as enumerated below. First were the Gramagras, or ordinary villages, paying the usual revenues. Then came the Pariharak villages, which were revenue-free. These were given to priest and teachers, who were entitled to collect the State's demands and use it themselves, not being required to pay anything to the State. In turn they had the obligation to spread education and otherwise help the people in the pursuits of Dharma, and this revenue grant was in the form of their salary. Then were the Ayudhuja villages, which were revenue-free by virtue of the fact that they supplied ready soldiers for the army in times of war. Lastly were villages which paid taxes in kind, not in cash, in the form of agricultural produce, animals, forest products, gold, silver, pearls, corals, conch shells and minerals extracted from earth, and in labour.

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH INDIA

Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji has rightly said: "Local Government in Northern India and that in Southern India belong to the same series in the order of sociological development. Their tribal origins and rudiments may have been diverse and heterogeneous, but there is no mistaking the essentially Indian stamp impressed upon these institutions." And, further: "..... the Southern institutions, when they first emerge into view, evince marks of a certain maturity and a certain established order, which point to a long process of silent growth in the dim twilight of the earlier centuries, unconnected though they might be with those political crises and cataclysms of State, which

leave historical records behind." It would appear that in the tenth century A.D. there existed a village Uttaramerrur, which is present to-day also under the name of Uttaramallur in Chingleput district in Tamil area. The Chola King Parantaka I was the then ruler. It was an agrahar village, and, as Dr. Altekar puts it, "the details given about the executive of the Grama Sabha, or the constitution of the panchayat have greatly benefited history." Dr. Mathai says that the main point revealed by these inscriptions is that there existed several committees for village administration. The committees, whose designation gives an idea of the nature of their responsibilities, were as under.

- (1) Annual Committee,
- (2) Garden Committee,
- (3) Tank Committee,
- (4) Gold Committee,
- (5) Committee of Justice,
- (6) A Committee styled Panch-Vara.

Life in the villages was to a large extent common and based on mutual aid rather than mutual exclusiveness. Dr. Mathai has quoted as follows : "From a South Indian inscription of the tenth century A.D., it would appear that each village owned a certain number of looms in common, and the weavers who worked them were maintained out of the village fund. Any other looms would be unauthorised.

Dr. Mathai has given the following list of officers and public servants in a Madras village at the beginning of the 19th century as revealed in the 1812 Select Committee Report of the House of Commons, the famous Fifth Report.

- (1) *The Headman* :—in charge of general superintendence, collection of village revenue, in charge of police work, settlement of village disputes.
- (2) *The Accountant* :—in charge of keeping account of cultivation and maintenance of registers of allied affairs.
- (3) *The Watchman* :—these were of two types, the superior and the inferior. The first one had to get information of crimes and offences and to escort and protect persons travelling from one village to another. The activities of the inferior one were confined to the village and included, among others, guarding the crops and assisting in measuring them.
- (4) *The Boundaryman* :—responsible for prescribing the limits of the village and giving evidence about them in cases of disputes.

- (5) *The Superintendent of the Tank and Water Courses* :—responsible for distribution of irrigation water.
- (6) *The Priest* :—performance of village worship.
- (7) *The Schoolmaster* :—teaching village children to read and write 'in the sand'!

Besides these are mentioned the astrologer, the smith and carpenter, the washerman, the barber, the cowkeeper, the doctor, the dancing girl, and the musician and poet. "The original method of remunerating the village servants was either by giving them a grant of land free of rent and sometimes free of revenue, or by giving them definite shares out of the common heap of grain on the threshing floor or from the individual harvest of every villager, or by combining grants of land and of grain—supplemented in each case by various occasional perquisites."

III

VILLAGE COMMUNITIES IN INDIA*

KARL MARX

"These small and extremely ancient Indian (village) communities some of which have continued down to this day, are based on possession in-common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour, which serves, whenever a new community is started as a plan and scheme ready cut and dried. Occupying areas from 100 up to several thousand acres, each forms a compact whole producing all it requires. The chief part of the products is destined for direct use by the community itself, and does not take the form of a commodity. Hence production here is independent of that division of labour brought about in Indian society as a whole, by means of the exchange of commodities. It is the surplus alone, that becomes a commodity and a portion of even that, not until it has reached the hands of the State, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of those products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind . . . The simplicity of organisation of production themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed spring up again on the spot and with the same name—this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic Societies, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic States and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure of the economic elements of society remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky."

*Reproduced from Capital Vol. I. Karl Marx, p. 397.

IV

MAINE'S THEORY OF INDIAN VILLAGE COMMUNITY*

B. H. BADEN-POWELL

(1) The theory is that: the Indian village communities may differ locally and in detail; they may exhibit signs of decay and change; but for purposes of comparative study they may be represented by a single typical form to which all approximate.

(2) The essential feature is that the village land is owned "in common" (or "collectively"); and that even where allotment in severalty has taken place, the idea of "cultivation in common" is kept up by minute rules regulating the village of the several holdings. The typical village has no headman, or single chief, being governed by a committee or council of the brotherhood.

(3) Sir H. S. Maine speaks of the typical village marked by collective ownership, as archaic and representing the universal primitive idea of property. Further, that it was the creation of the Aryan races (i.e. in India, the Sanskrit speaking tribes of the Vedic and Epic Poems).

(4) Originally the bodies owning in "common" had no definite shares; the acknowledgement of them (in one form or another) was a later invention—a state in the process of development from "common" to "individual" property.

(5) The groups consist of persons originally connected by consanguinity, or at least assumed to be so; this was in time more or less completely forgotten, and the body is now held together solely by the land which the members cultivate in common. The (only) raison of these communities is the tillage of the soil.

(6) And lastly, we are informed that these communities are not simple bodies, with equal rights; they are composite groups, containing social layers amalgamated at different (remote) times; so that the whole composes a sort of hierarchy from the highest caste down to the lower artisans, labourers, etc.

*Reproduced from *The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India*, by B. H. Baden-Powell, pp. 98.

VILLAGE TYPES*

B. H. BADEN-POWELL

In order briefly to distinguish the class of village in which there is no joint ownership from that in which there is something of the kind, I must use the rather uncouth terms SEVERALTY village and JOINT village. I should like to call the latter "manorial villages"—the village becomes subject to some kind of "overlordship," as it so often is; but the term would only accurately fit one class of cases, and, moreover, would sound too strange, at any rate in the present stage of the discussion.

It may be convenient to summarise the salient features of difference between the two kinds of villages in short table:

I. SEVERALTY (or Raiyatwari)
VILLAGE:

1. Influential headman (often still possessing certain privileges) is part of the natural constitution.
2. Holdings entirely separate and not shares of a unit estate.
3. No joint liability for revenue: each holding separately assessed on its merits.
4. No jointly owned area of waste or "common" land belongs to the village or is available for partition.

II. JOINT VILLAGE

1. No headman originally, but a panchayat, in modern times an official headman, appointed to represent the community.
2. The holdings (sometimes joint) are shares of a unit estate.
3. Liability (joint and several) always, for the revenue assessed in a lump sum.
4. The village site, and usually an area of waste, owned in common, and is available for partition.

The severalty village with its hereditary headman, is the prevalent form over the whole of Bengal (excluding Bihar), over Central India,

*Reproduced from *The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India*, by B. H. Baden-Powell, p. 18.

and the West and South ; while there is reason to believe it was once prevalent in such parts of Northern India as were earliest cultivated, until the conquering tribes and landlord families changes the constitution, and the joint form grew up. However that may be, it is a plain matter of fact that the joint village is confined, i.e. as the prevalent type, to the north of India—from the Indus as far east as Bihar, though it is (or was once) found locally, and under special circumstances, elsewhere.

VI

VICTORY OF VILLAGE*

D. D. KOSAMBI

THE FORMATION OF A VILLAGE ECONOMY

The *smṛti* foreshadows complete victory of the village, with consequences far deadlier than any invasion. The hidebound caste system became rigid only within stagnant villages whose chief intellectual product, the Brahmin, was stamped with incurable rusticity elevated to religious dogma. For an orthodox Brahmin, travel beyond the traditional limits of *arya-desa* entailed penance; residence was forbidden. Let him not enter into a town, let him not allow the dust of the town to settle upon him, is another characteristic recommendation of the Baudhayana dharma sutra (2.3.33), also disobeyed regularly. This mentality killed history. It mattered little which king ruled over relatively changeless village.

The superb coinage of the Indo-Greek rulers meant as little as any other piece of silver to the countryside which lived by petty internal production, paid taxes in kind to anyone strong enough to extort them, so had very little use for currency. The passage of years had little meaning compared with the vital round of the seasons, because the villagers produced almost all they needed every year, to consume it (but for that portion expropriated for taxes) by the time of the next harvest. As a result, Brahmin scholars joined (and still engage in) bitter theological controversy about the *tithi* (lunar date) of a festival event like Rama's legendary conquest of Lanka, without troubling themselves as to the year. It is only in Jain manuscripts that the date by year and era is normally given, because the merchants were used to keeping annual records over a long period. Any unusual character produced by the village migrated to a court, or was canonized by his fellow villagers; in either case, his saga and memory were swallowed up in folklore or legend. Awareness of strangers means steady contact by travel, warfare or trade. Of these, the first was negligible, in the guise of pilgrimage. The second was impossible to the disarmed villages, the third reduced to a low minimum monopolized by exclusive, despised, professional groups. To the village priest, myth gradually became more real than whatever happened to his neighbours of low caste with whom cultural or social inter-course was low. Differences

*Reproduced from *The Study of Indian History*, by D. D. Kosambi, pp. 243-245.

between villages were eroded by the static mode of production, so that a village founded in 1500 A.D. looked about the same after century or two as one first settled over a thousand years earlier. The Indian village appeared "timeless" to foreign observers simply because memory and record of time served no useful purpose in the life of the village.

The village-kingdom of the Manusmṛti had little use for the Buddhism suited to combine warring aryanized tribes into a new society, or for the earlier vedic religion. But elements from both were retained, the Brahmin preached non-violence at the same time as war, and supposedly devoted himself to vedic study. The traditional five great vedic animal-sacrifices had now degenerated into symbolic offerings (Ms. 3.67-71). The hard-drinking fighter, Indra (Dionysos of Megasthenes), and the vedic gods, except Vishnu reshaped, could not be modified to suit newer needs, though the attempt had been made. New gods developed, better suited to the rustic mentality, more paying to the Brahmin. The most successful was Vishnu-Narayana-Krishna, who dominates the final redaction of the Mbh, which is closely related to the Ms. It was easy to absorb all prominent ancient or local cults as incarnations of numina of the god. This syncretism gave a unity to the Brahmins, a cultural unity to the land. It was most important for the absorption of foreigners into a caste society."

VII

THE INDIAN VILLAGE*

IRAWATI KARVE

A structure is something concrete and visual as also something abstract and conceptual. It is objective and subjective and the grades of objectivity and subjectivity differ from people to people depending on their social conditioning. A structure has a form or gestalt which may be sharply defined and simple or indistinct and vague. For a casual observer the habitation area called a village has a gross form in most cases. This form gets disturbed and becomes indistinct in certain ways and still something called "a village" remains with its objective boundaries and its subjective feelings for those who live in a village as also for those who are its neighbours. In some recent field work in certain areas of Maharashtra (the region where Marathi is spoken) I felt forcibly the gestalt aspect of the entity we call a village. The question presented itself to me in a negative way. As I viewed certain villages and walked through them I found myself asking why the area was called a village at all.

VILLAGE TYPES ACCORDING TO THEIR STRUCTURE

It would be very difficult to experiment about the gestalt of a village but one can define certain types of villages. For a casual observer the habitation area called a village has a gross discernible form in some cases. This form tends to be obliterated in certain ways and yet a village remains a felt entity for one who lives in it. In Maharashtra there appear to be three types of villages which are differently constituted as regards their gestalt.

One type is the tightly nucleated village with the habitation clearly defined from the surrounding cultivated fields. These villages are situated on high plateau of the Deccan.

In such villages, while the habitation area is well marked, the boundaries of the village together with its fields are never perceived. The fields owned by one village merge into those owned by another except where a hillock or a stream or a highway forms the boundary.

The second type of village is found on the west-coast (the Konkan) near the coast. The villages are generally strung along length-wise on

*Reproduced from Deccan Bulletin, Vol. XVIII (Taraporewala Volume).

the two sides of a road. The houses stand in their own compounds with their fruit and cocoanut gardens and are fenced on all sides. One walks or drives through fences on both sides of the road all the time. There are numerous tiny streams joining the Arabian sea and there are also spurs of the western mountains (the Sahyadri) coming right into the ocean. Where the streams join the sea they widen considerably, are fordable at low tide and have on both sides strips of the salt marshes called Khajana. These natural obstacles divide one village from the other. Where these are absent one village merges into the other and a casual traveller does not become aware of having crossed from one habitatic area into another. The gestalt has changed not merely as regards form but also as regards the inter-relation of the background and the gestalt.

In such villages the exploitation of land is of two types—horticulture and agriculture. The gardens of cocoanut and arecanut palms and plantain, jack fruits and cashewnuts are planted near the house and fenced in, while the rice fields may lie a little away from the houses though in some areas they come right to the steps of the houses. There is no sharp distinction between the habitation area and the cultivated area.

(3) The third type of the village was found in the Satpura mountains on the north-western boundary of the Marathi-speaking region. The Satpura mountains are made up of seven main east-west folds with undulating high valleys in between.

The houses are situated in their own fields in clusters of two or three huts all belonging to a single close kinship group. They are either the huts of a father and grown-up sons or brothers and their wives. Sometimes a woman and her husband may have a hut in the same cluster as that of the father and brothers of the woman.

The next cluster of huts may be as far as a furlong or two away depending on how big the holding of each cluster is. The village boundaries are many times not defined even by streams or hillocks because the houses belonging to one village are situated on separate hillocks or divided by streamlets. Added to this scattering is the habit of the Bhils to change the location of habitation on the smallest pretext ranging from a mishap to just wish to be near a friend or even just wanting a change.

In this area the village loses its gestalt completely, on all four sides. The habitation area is not distinguished from the cultivated area and the widely scattered houses of such villages are many times nearer to the houses in the next village than to the houses of its own village.

The clusters of habitation illustrated above may belong to two or three villages and but for the stone heaps erected by the revenue department to mark the boundaries it would be difficult to separate one village from the other.

FUNCTION OF ROADS

The function of the roads is different in these three types. In the first type (the tightly nucleated villages) there are two types of roads.

- (a) The roads connecting different villages meant for inter-village communications ;
- (b) Internal streets or narrow alleys connecting housing areas, Sometimes a main arterial road may pass through or near a village and owing to modern ribbon development may become the main street of the village but such cases are very few. One can generally distinguish between roads connecting villages and streets connecting internal habitation areas.

In the case of the villages of the second type, the main road in the village is generally also the main arterial road joining the villages of the coast for miles and miles in one linear direction. Such roads are seen in most villages of the west-coast from Bombay to Cape Comorin. The road from Cape Comorin to Trivandrum in the extreme south-west of India is a typical example of such a road.

In the third type of village there are no village streets because no houses are aligned along streets. There are only footpaths leading from one house cluster to another and the continuation of these leads to houses in the next village.

As a consequence of these different ways of grouping houses in habitatic areas, the individual dwelling or a cluster of dwellings gain individuality—are seen as a gestalt—to the same degree that the village or the whole habitation area loses its individuality or distinctness. In the tightly packed Deccan villages one loses sight of the individual houses which are but vaguely felt as parts of a big conglomerate. In the linear coastal village a house being situated in its own compound and separated from the next house, has a greater individuality is however blurred to a certain extent as a single house in the Deccan villages. This individuality is however blurred to a certain extent as a single house is but one in a long row of similar houses. It is the row which impresses itself on the observer rather than the individual house. In the Bhil-area the individual house or houses cluster is a gestalt whose individuality is not disturbed by the proximity of the other houses. On the other hand, the widely spaced houses

or cluster are not experienced as a unity making one village separating itself from a similar unity called another village.

The first type of village is the one found all over the Maharashtra plateau as also in other parts of India like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra, Mysore and Orissa. . . .

The second type of village is found as already stated all along the Western Coast. Whether the same type is found also on the eastern coast I do not know.

The third type of village is found in parts of the Satpura region as also along the coast slightly in the interior. There are villages of scattered homesteads in the coastal area where sometimes the only way of internal communication is walking over the narrow bunds of the tiny rice fields, a very tricky business for strangers especially when all the fields are full of water. Though this type is found in some hilly regions as also in some parts of the coast it cannot be called a jungle type or a primitive type either, as there are a number of jungle people who live in villages where the houses are clustered together in a nucleus but are not as tightly packed as in some of the Deccan villages. The Gonds and the Kolams in Maharashtra and Andhra and the Katkaris in Maharashtra, the Bette Kuruba, the Jenu Kuruba, the Erawa and the Sholega of Mysore also live in villages made up of many huts. The Warli of the West Coast and the Cheachus living in the Nallamalai hills live sometimes either in an individual family house apart from others or in a cluster of a few houses which cannot rightly be called a village.

COMMUNICATION IN NUCLEATED VILLAGES

The nucleated Deccan villages show a clear distinction between communications within one village and communications with other villages. In modern Marathi there are words which are used exclusively for roads within a habitation area. There are also words as in Sanskrit which are used for both internal and external communication arteries but there is a whole series of words which denote various types of roads inside a habitation area. *Ali*, *Galli*, *Bol* are some of these words. *Ali* is a row of houses of one caste, or one profession; *Brahmin Ali* means a road both sides of which there are Brahmin houses, *Tambat Ali* means a road both sides of which have the workshops of the makers of brass and copper pots. *Galli* is a narrow street. "*Galli Kuchchi*" is an expression used for narrow roads full of mean houses. "*Kuchchi*" might have relation with word '*Kancho*' used for a certain type of communication in Gujarat.

We find that an explanation of the various words used for an internal system of communication involves reference to social struc-

tures like the family and the caste. It would appear that these words have primarily reference to a type of habitation area with the larger habitation area called a village and secondarily mean communication arteries with a village. They reflect a differentiated society, leading to a separate area for houses leading to sub-areas and hence to internal communication channels. The differentiation with an inhabited village may be based on lineage or caste and we will describe it presently.

Whatever the place name suffixes, the most common word for an habitation area in Marathi is 'Gaon' and in Telugu it is "Oor."

INTER-RELATION BETWEEN GAON AND WADI

In Maharashtra each 'Gaon' has habitation clusters a little away from the main habitation area. These clusters are called 'Vadi' and are said to belong to a "Gaon." In the same way in the Andhra Pradesh there are clusters of huts a little away from the main village which are called '*Palli*' or '*Guda*' which are said to belong to an 'Oor.' The inter-relation of the Wadi and Gaon is many fold. The Wadi people sometimes call the Gaon to which they belong 'Kasaba' or 'Pethi' words which mean an area where various types of craftsmen (Kasabi) live or where there is shopping and market centre. The hereditary village servants and village craftsmen live in the Gaon. The village headman, the Patil, also must live in the Gaon, the revenue records and office are situated in a gaon. A wadi is generally a cluster of agnatically connected households. It may sometimes have just one big family with its farm servants and livestock. Sometimes people live in temporary huts in Wadis and have more permanent houses in the Gaon. Sometimes a Wadi is a settlement of a particular caste which by the nature of its occupation may need a larger space than is available in a gaon. In the eastern parts of the Satara district many villages have Banagar Wadis a few furlongs away from the main village. The Banagars are shepherds who need large compounds near their houses for their mixed herds of sheep and goats. It also seems probable that this is an immigrant element which has made a separate settlement near a village with the consent of the villagers. In the same way there are Ramoshiwadis, i.e. hamlets where only the Ramoshi live.

They were counted among criminal tribes, Wadis are called generally after clan name or after a tribe or a caste. Vaghwadi, Shinde Wadi, Kamat Wadi are names of the first type. Banagar Wadi, Ramoshi Wadi, Brahman Wadi are of the second type.

The wadi originally is a cluster of hutments belonging to one family or belonging to two or three families whose fields lie in the immediate neighbourhood. Sometimes, these are temporarily inhabited during the sowing and the harvesting season for facility of work in the field and the necessity to guard the crop.

Sometimes when the population is growing and there is available land for new settlement and the habits of the people are semi-nomadic, an originally compact village splits into different habitation areas. Recently, I came across such a village in the jungle tract of the Shrikakulam district of the Andhra Pradesh. The village is called Devanpuram. The original village was a settlement of two tribes, the Jatapu and the Savara. The Savara went a few furlongs away and had their own settlement. The Savara settlement split and one part has gone about a mile away over the hills and has a settlement there. Devanpura is thus an Oor with three Pallis—(1) A Jatapu palli, (2) a small Savara palli called China Savara palli and (3) a bigger Savara palli called Pedda Savara Palli. This split has occurred since the last survey. If they remain in their present situations, the three parts may be acknowledged as three separate villages with the same name but separate headmen; for example, the villages called 'Gondi.' The two villages are within a mile of each other. The one near the road is as usual Jatapu-Gondi and the one nearer the hills and a little more inaccessible is the Savara Gondi. Generally, the most important and the most independent of these Wadis or Wada is that of the fisher folk and in a recent study we found that in one village the Koli or Bhoi are successfully defying the authority of the main village.

VILLAGE—AN EVER-CHANGING NUCLEUS

A village is thus an ever-changing nucleus of habitations from which tiny clusters separate and remain attached or separate completely to form a new nucleus. The quality of being a 'gestalt' objectively and subjectively is thus a dynamic quality which makes it difficult to give a definition of a village which would apply to all villages. This difficulty will be more apparent when we look closer into the internal structure of a village.

Among many semi-nomadic primitive agriculturists a village may endure for as few as three years. When the soil round about is exhausted the whole village moves off to somewhere else. Villages which were registered as existing at a particular place during the last elections are no longer there.

In the plains the villages are generally permanent and of long standing and hundreds of epigraphic records have shown that villages with the same boundaries have existed for over a thousand years.

In Maharashtra, there is a great variation as regards villages and the families they contain. For a particular caste there may be only one family (with one clan-name), for other castes there may be several families so that for one caste there is village exogamy while for the other castes there may be marriage within a village.

In the South, multi-clan village is the rule. In the North, where there are no clans, villages are supposed to be peopled by descendants of one ancestor for each caste and there is strict exogamy. This exogamy applies even when people of separate ancestries and Gotras come and live in the village.

CASTE AND HABITATION AREA IN A VILLAGE

Generally, a village in India is, however, socially a far more complicated structure and the complexity is reflected in the way houses are built and roads existed. A village generally has more than one caste. In the North and sometimes even in Maharashtra there may be only one lineage of a caste, but generally in the North and almost as a rule in the Dravidian South, each caste in a village is made up of more than one lineage and clan. A map of a village will show almost invariably that the habitation area of each caste is separated from that of the other by a greater or a lesser distance. A few castes may live in houses situated side by side but others live apart. The castes which are always separated from the others are those whose touch was supposed to pollute the rest—the so-called 'untouchables'. Their habitation area has generally a distinct name. In Maharashtra there is a *Maharwada* in almost every village. *Mang* is another untouchable caste which has its dwelling cluster separate from the rest of the village and also from the *Mahars*. The same is the case in *Andhra Pradesh* where the *Mala* live apart from the rest of the village. The *Madiga* live near the *Mala* but have a separate cluster of houses. The *Maharwada* or the *Mala* and *Madiga Vadi* are generally at the end of a village, hence the sanskrit name *Ante-Vasi* (living at the end) and the Marathi name *Vesakar* (living near or outside the wall of a village). The *Kumbhars* (potters) also live a little away from the rest of the village and their part of the village is called *Kumbhar Vada*. Villages which have weavers in their population also have a separate area where weavers live. If there are a number of Brahmin houses they have an area for themselves. The shepherds live so far away that their habitation area is termed a *Wadi* of the village.

This tendency to have separate sub-areas for habitation within a larger unit called a village can be explained in various ways and on different grounds like caste-hierarchy, ideas of impurity and pollution, the need for certain occupations to have room for carrying out the different processes needed for their craft. The first reason applies to the house complexes generally, the second applies to the distance found between the untouchable quarters and the rest, the third applies to castes like potters, brickmakers, weavers and dyers, shepherds, wool carders and blanket makers etc. To me it appears that there is an inherent tendency in the Indian culture to form separate groups and remain separate. The arguments listed above all strengthen this tendency and the phenomenon called 'caste,' apart from its hierar-

chical structure, is the direct outcome of this tendency. The primary group is the large family, sometimes unilateral sometimes bilateral. This group extends into the caste. The family as well as the caste are based on territory. The smallest territorial unit is the area in which the house and the family land are situated, the largest territorial unit in that part of linguistic area through which a caste has spread. Rarely is any area, small or big, in sole possession and occupation of a single family or a single caste so that we find in each such area a check-pattern of sub-areas belonging to families, clans, and castes. I have not seen anywhere either castes or tribes living inter-mingled. However tightly nucleated and crowded a village, the check-pattern sub-areas were always there.

This tendency is seen even among the primitives. The Bhils are divided into endogamous sub-divisions. They have villages of mixed population where sometimes allied tribes like Dhanak and untouchables live. Each of these has a separate habitation area and within each area there are house-clusters belonging to different lineages.

This is but a preliminary study of habitation areas and their structure. The way people build their houses, the way they group them, the way arteries of internal and external communication are formed would lend itself to ecological and anthropological analysis and may help to establish environmental-geographical as well as cultural zones and by linking with social institutions like the family and the caste will help to understand the meaning of the social institutions. It will perhaps reveal the fact that the unity or uniformity of Indian culture is based on tiny check-patterns fitted one into the other rather than a uni-colour homogeneity.

VIII

THE CO-OPERATIVE VILLAGE*

TARLOK SINGH

OBJECTIVE DESIRED

We see the village of the future as a community composed of equal citizens, in which the have-nots have full opportunity no less than the haves, and everyone in the community has similar values and aspirations. Reaching a goal such as this involves fundamental changes in the ownership and management of land as well as in the pattern of employment. It also involves a re-orientation of the outlook of all sections of the community concerning their own situation as well as their relationship to others.

If these are the objectives, it is necessary to work out appropriate processes and institutions for attaining them. This is a large theme and in this short paper it is not possible to do more than touch briefly upon some aspects of the problem. Three preliminary premises may, however, be stated. Firstly, rural society cannot be expected to be much more integrated and classless than the larger national community of which it forms part, although necessarily rural areas will have a less differentiated social and economic structure. It is, therefore, a necessary assumption that although there will be differences in application, fundamentally a similar social approach will be applied to changes in rural as in no-rural society. In the second place, the goal of a classless society may be reached through class conflict and the victory, as it were, of the have-nots over the haves, or by removing disparities giving greater opportunity to those who have been handicapped in the past, and stress on the fusion of various elements in the community. The latter is the way of democracy, of co-operation. Elements of conflict are recognised and in the interest of the community as a whole, steps are taken to reduce them as rapidly as may be possible, both as a matter of social policy and in response to new demands and challenges from those adversely affected. In the third place, while individual claims and incentives are allowed for, the larger emphasis has to be on instruments of a social character. For the greater part these turn on the nature and functions of the community organisation and the obligations placed upon it.

*Reproduced from *The Economic Weekly Annual Number*, January, 1958, pp. 143-148.

NO SYNTHESIS

The objective of change at the village structure as part of a larger economy, largely through the initiative and resources of the local community, by assuring equality of social status and economic opportunity to all sections and all individuals in the community, and achieving levels of production and employment as would lift each village community out of its present state of poverty, ignorance and ill-health.

The question may be asked whether the efforts now being made in different directions are likely in the course of a few years to reach the objective defined above. It is true that the development of irrigation, power, communications and industries can do a great deal to strengthen the economy of an area. A large part of the justification of the community development programme lies in its stress on local resources and initiative. Programmes such as land reform and welfare schemes for backward classes are intended to reduce social and economic disparities. The object of the various agricultural programmes is to raise the productivity of land and increase production, even as it is the aim of education and health programmes to ameliorate the condition of the people and to extend educational facilities to the limit of the resources available. If the experience of the past few years is any guide, these various efforts are likely to take rural areas only a small way in the direction of the objective we have indicated. In part, this may no doubt be due to the very complexity of the process of development and the gulf which inevitably arises between the aspiration and the reality. In considerable part, however, the inadequacy of much that is being undertaken arises from a certain absence of synthesis in our approach to rural planning. The main local resources in a rural area are land and manpower. To get the best out of them, we need appropriate organisations, improved technology and capital investment which would supplement local resources.

UNRELATED TO REAL NEEDS

In each area conditions have to be created in which there is the necessary organisation to realise the full value of the manpower resources available and to apply the improved technology to agriculture and other activities. If our efforts were concentrated to a greater extent on this essential task, much greater progress might be achieved in rural development. Without minimising the usefulness of what is being done, it would be readily granted that at present we do not succeed in using local manpower resources or developing other resources to any great extent. This may be largely because we have not clearly identified the instruments for achieving the changes that we desired. In development blocks under the Community Development Programme we think less of the economic and social structure we are creating and far more of the various development schemes which Government agencies are to sponsor and execute.

Similarly at the village level, we fail to see the village community as a whole, how its resources are to be developed, how much as a community it can do for itself, and we give much more attention to odd schemes for which assistance is provided from Government funds—schemes which hardly touch the heart of the problem. Again, at the village level the entire programme of co-operative development now being undertaken is little more than a series of somewhat isolated activities, not related sufficiently closely to the well-being of the community as a whole, and to the development of its total resources.

AGRARIAN STRUCTURE UNCHANGES

The land reform programme has done much to correct immediate injustices and to ensure security to the tiller, but its other aspects which are related to the building up of the desired agrarian structure, have yet to be taken in hand. The net effect of the drawbacks mentioned above is that there is not enough purposeful and co-ordinated activity at the village level by each community in developing its land and other resources, using its manpower to the best advantage, assuming new obligations and responsibilities and creating a milieu in which every member of the community has a contribution to make and a future to look to. Proceeding on these lines, the pace of social and economic development is likely to be relatively slow and uneven and for large sections of the rural community, the gains may not be appreciable.

NEED FOR CO-OPERATIVE VILLAGES

It is from this aspect, more than from any other, that there is need to build up co-operative villages as the effective base of the entire rural economy. The co-operative village is to be regarded as a direction in which to move as rapidly as each village community finds possible. In moving towards the co-operative village, the various programmes for which Government agencies are responsible under the National Plan can help a great deal if, in pursuing their specific aims, they are all guided by the same basic social objective. In that event, they will reinforce the efforts of one another and will also strengthen the village organisation. The co-operative village should not be viewed as a rigid pattern of relationships, of land management or of employment, for there is no limit to the growth of a community which organises its work on co-operative lines and also co-operates in larger tasks with other similar communities in the area.

We may attempt here a brief statement of the conditions under which a village community may be able to work for the goal of the co-operative village. The first condition is the acceptance of the obligation of the welfare and livelihood of each of its members. To discharge this obligation a community has to function through village

institutions, the village panchayat and the village co-operative. With the pressure of population that exists in many areas, individual village communities can only plan for increasing their productive resources and assuring work to everyone if their plans are linked with the plans of the area of which they form part, just as the plans of different areas have to be linked with the plans of the State. The second condition, therefore, is that village planning and area planning should be undertaken as essential parts of the same process. This would make it possible for each area, as for each village, to assess its requirements and its resources and to put forth the maximum effort of which it is capable in realising the potential that exists. Programmes such as agriculture or village industries or social services for which there have to be different Government agencies become integrated into fully co-ordinated programmes and acquire much greater value in terms of the development of given village communities and given areas. Close to the soil, they would cease to be mere "schemes" run by different agencies as such.

MUST BE VOLUNTARY

In the third place, in moving in the direction of the co-operative village, it is to be clearly understood that land belongs to individual peasants and it is their rights and privilege to choose to cultivate it either as individuals or as co-operative groups. The land reform programme has been conceived so as to strengthen the peasant base of the rural economy and to reduce disparities. If this programme has failed so far to release new energy in most rural areas, this is to be attributed in large part to the fact that it leans too heavily on administrative and legal processes and is not designed at present to function as a community programme in which each village community has a direct stake and a clear responsibility.

Land reform will be a creative force in the development of the rural economy if it is conceived as a vital element in the building up of co-operative village communities. In so far as it makes for a more homogeneous village society, land reform should, therefore, facilitate the development of co-operation in farming as well as other activities. Viewed thus, it would be the aim of public policy and of village planning to encourage, assist and guide co-operative farms which are established voluntarily by local groups. Naturally, the pace at which co-operative farming develops will be determined by its working in actual practice, the results achieved and the manner in which problems of human relationships are resolved. During the progress towards the co-operative village, therefore, there will be in varying degree, co-operative farms as well as individual peasant farms, but both sets of farms will be units within the village plan and the scheme of land management accepted by the community.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

The fourth condition for progress towards the co-operative village is that besides individual peasant holdings and co-operative farms established as voluntary associations there should be an area of community ownership in each village. Such community ownership would partly be in the form of land, partly in the form of shares in economic enterprises in the villages and in the area in which the village is situated and partly also by way of social services provided by the community, such as the village school and the health centre. Lands derived through gifts made by individuals (Bhoodan) from the application of ceilings on existing agricultural holdings or through contributions made during consolidation of holdings and common pasture-lands would all enter the pool of community ownership. Even a small proportion of the area of the village under the ownership and management of the community can have extraordinary social and economic significance. For one thing, such an area can provide the resources to each village community to attain a state of universal literacy—an aim which at present seems difficult of achievement in less than a generation. Those sections of the community which have suffered in the past from special handicaps can be brought speedily to a level which gives them equal opportunity with others.

Areas owned and managed directly by the community are likely to be worked with improved methods, including the use of agricultural machinery, and can be developed as mixed farms with ancillary enterprises. The value of such development in terms of local employment potential and for creating new forms of work and services cannot be overestimated. What the relative proportions of areas worked individually, co-operatively by groups and by the community as a whole may be in the course of time will depend upon the judgment and the experience of the people, but we could certainly look for a steady expansion in the co-operative and community sectors of the rural economy. In developing the community sector, the social philosophy of Gramdan has a rich contribution to make. A village in which Bhoodan and Gramdan are adopted to any considerable extent (even if the entire area is not made available), takes a leap forward in the reconstruction of its economy whose full implications may not yet be easy to perceive. In the conception of the co-operative village, therefore, Bhoodan and Gramdan enter as ingredients of the utmost importance equally with all the programmes now undertaken under the scheme of national planning.

STATE HELP ESSENTIAL

The fifth condition for rapid development towards co-operative village concerns steps to be taken for co-operative reorganisation of marketing, distribution and processing activities. These represent an

area in which the peasant and the village have long been the weaker parties. Rural capital formation can be greatly enhanced if, on the one hand, local manpower resources are fully mobilised and on the other, in the course of a few years, through deliberate planning, private merchants, traders and entrepreneurs are replaced by co-operative institutions. Co-operative marketing and processing units, where they are of any size, should bring together not only individuals who subscribe capital but also village communities as organised units.

The resources of villages and of individuals could be further supplemented by the State, for, in these fields the State has a special contribution to make by way of guidance in policy and planning, management and capital. Co-operative alone left to themselves to face the existing competition of the local trader and the entrepreneur, cannot get very far in bringing marketing, distribution and processing into the co-operative sector. These are activities in which the State as representing the overall national interest, co-operative associations and village communities and individuals have all to function as partners. These activities help to make each village an organic unit in the total economic structure of an area. Moreover, such problems as the securing of the marketable surplus in foodgrains, maintenance of agricultural prices and the distribution of foodgrains and other supplies can be resolved fully in accordance with public policy and the needs of the community as a whole.

MAJOR GOAL OF POLICY

The reorganisation and development of the economy of a large country is a highly complex and varied undertaking. All manner of institutions, incentives and programmes have to find their right place in the scheme of planning. Therefore, we must be careful not to overrate the role of any one set of institutions or policies. At the same time, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that in the progress of the Indian economy in the coming years the most important single element will be the rate of growth in the rural sector. Here we have far greater advantage on our side than in many other fields, for the resources needed are in essence already with us. Today, these resources are being utilised to an extent which can only be regarded as meagre. The main hope of vitalising the rural economy, of greatly increasing the impact of development which is already under way in rural areas, lies in harnessing all agencies to the tasks of integrated area planning and village planning. In this context, the co-operative village, conceived as the base of a large co-operative rural structure, becomes a major goal of policy and progress towards it an essential means of social and economic advance.

SECTION IV AGRARIAN STRATIFICATION
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I

AGRARIAN CLASSES IN INDIA*

DANIEL THORNER

Let us start, then, with an attempt to define our field of concern. We can say that our aim is to describe and analyse the network of relations among the various groups of persons who draw their livelihood from the soil. We are also concerned with the consequences of this pattern of relationships for the economy of the country as a whole.

NATURE OF CLASSES IN RURAL INDIA

In order to describe the relations among classes, we must agree on the nature of the classes. Or, more correctly, in order to describe the nature of the classes, we must set forth the relationships obtaining among them. The agrarian structure is, after all, not an external framework within which various classes function, but rather it is the sum total of the ways in which each group operates in relation to the other groups. We will find that some of these relations are defined and enforced by law. Others are customary. Still others are of a flexible or

*Reproduced from *The Agrarian Prospect in India* by Daniel Thorner, pp. 2-6.

fluctuating character. I might observe in passing that the agrarian history of India is replete with instances of efforts to change these relationships by law, efforts which have almost always fallen far short of their goals or had effects other than those intended.

What, then, are the basic differences of interest in the rural scene to-day? We all know that there are landlords, tenants, and labourers.

Let us try to set up criteria which will help us marshal these divergent systems of tenure and cultivation into usable categories. We can begin by asking in what form the income from the soil is obtained. Is it received as rent, as the fruit of cultivation, or as payment for labour? We can then ask what type of rights in the soil are enjoyed, and just how much land is held under these rights. Finally we can inquire to what extent the individual actually performs the required field work, or whether others are hired to do it for him.

MALIK, KISAN, MAZDUR

If we look at the rural position today with these questions in mind, I think we will find that, despite wide regional variations, we can trace a common pattern. Roughly speaking there are three principal groups, whom we can call proprietors, working peasants, and labourers. Or, better, we could use the terms *malik*, *kisan*, and *mazdur*.

MALIKS

By *malik* or proprietor we will refer to a family whose agricultural income is derived primarily (although not necessarily solely) from property rights in the soil. That is to say that whatever other sources of family funds may exist, such as from a profession or business, the main agricultural income is derived from a share of the produce of lands belonging to the family. Typically, this share will be realized in the form of rent. Usually the rent will be taken in money, but it may be in kind if the tenants are on a cropsharing basis. Instead of renting out his lands, however, a proprietor may hire labourers to cultivate them for him. He may manage these hired labourers himself or he may hire someone else as manager. He may actually go into the fields and perform some of the work alongside of his labourers, although this is far from typical; but, even so, we would class him as a *malik* if his agricultural income from that part of his holdings which he cultivates with his own hands is less than the amount he receives from renting out the rest of his lands, or having them tilled by hired labourers. You will note that I am making no distinction here between proprietors who rent out their land and those whose fields are cultivated by hired labourers. Some of you, I know, will

raise your eyebrows at this. May I ask you to accept this grouping tentatively for the time being? In the course of these lectures the reasons for lumping the two together will become clearer. At this point I may simply observe that many proprietors today exploit their holdings simultaneously in both of these ways, i.e. they give out part to tenants or cropsharers, and reserve part to be worked by hired labourers. We may recall that in the history of economics the distinction between income derived from the performance of labour and income derived from the possession of property is older and more fundamental than the classical division of income into wages, rent and profits.

Usually, but not necessarily, the malik or proprietor will enjoy a high type of property right in the soil. He may hold directly under the Government, or he may be a superior tenant with rights of occupancy, transfer, mortgage, and inheritance protected by law. He may hold various lands under more than one type of tenure. The total amount of land held is such that the income serves to meet the major share of the family's expenses (or, at least, the expenses of those members of the family resident in the village). One or another member of the family may act as manager or supervisor, but none is required to work with his hands in the fields in order to assure the family's sustenance.

Within this group or class of maliks, it is possible to separate out two subgroups. One consists of large absentee landlords who typically have holdings in more than one village. The second consists of smaller proprietors who reside personally in the village in which they own land, and usually exercise some degree of management and control over its cultivation. It must be emphasised that the distinction here is not one of formal tenure. Either of these two types of proprietor may have the highest type of property rights. Either may be an occupancy tenant. Both have the same basic economic interest in keeping up the level of rent payable to them by lesser tenants, subtenants, or croppers; and keeping down the level of wages of farm servants and other field labourers. For it is the maliks, large and small, who are the receivers of rural rent and the chief employers of rural labour.

KISANS

The members of the second class, whom we will call kisans, or working peasants, have also a recognized property interest in the land. They may be small owners, or tenants with varying degrees of security. By and large (but not in every State) their legal and customary right will be somewhat inferior to those of the maliks in the same village. The chief distinguishing feature, however, is the amount of land held. In the case of the working kisan, the size of the holding is such that

it supports only single family and then only if one or more members of the family actually perform the field labour. In fact, the produce from the land owned by kisan may not even provide the entire income required by his family, but at least it provides a larger share than whatever funds he may receive from other agricultural sources, such as doing labour on other peoples' lands. Kisans, as defined here, are those villagers who live primarily by their own toil on their own lands. They do not employ labour, except briefly in the ploughing or harvest season, nor do they commonly receive rent.

MAZDUR

The third rural class, that of labourers or mazdur, comprises those villagers who gain their livelihood primarily from working on other peoples' land. Families in this class may indeed have tenancy rights in the soil, or even property rights, but the holdings are so small that the income from cultivating them or from renting them out comes to less than the earnings from field work. Wages may be received in money or in kind. If the latter, they may be fixed or in the form of a crop share. In practice the lower ranks of croppers and tenants-at-will are almost indistinguishable from mazdur; they will tentatively be included in this category.

I have suggested, by these definitions, that we may divide rural India into three main classes: the maliks or proprietors, the kisans or working peasants, and the mazdur or agricultural labourers. The key to the division is the amount of actual labour contributed to the production process and the share in the product. The extent to which income is received despite lack of participation in agricultural work may well be an index to the severity of the agrarian problem.

II

MALIKS AND MONEY-LENDERS—THEIR ROLE*

DANIEL THORNER

Socially, the resident maliks and money-lenders form a small and quite distinctive group within the village. A handful of six or a dozen families, they typically belong to Brahman, Thakur, or other high-ranking castes; alternatively, as in Andhra, they may be members of respectable cultivating castes like the Kammas, Reddis, or Raos. They live in larger houses wear finer clothes, and eat a better diet than the rest of the villagers. They may send their children to higher schools, subscribe to newspapers, listen to battery radios, or own bicycles—all luxuries usually quite beyond the compass of the debt-ridden kisans, to say nothing of the landless *mazdurlog*.

Between these last two groups, although the community of economic interest may appear very large, there is a steep social barrier. The kisans are drawn primarily from cultivating or artisan castes; the *mazdurlog* primarily from Harijans, Scheduled, depressed or "backward" classes. Certain types of work locally considered degrading, such as ploughing in the Eastern U.P., are reserved for these lowly servitors. The rare Chamar, Mahar, Panchama or other untouchable who prospers economically and attempts to secure a foothold for his family by buying land may find insurmountable obstacles in the way of the purchase. For he is up against the deeply entrenched tradition of rural inequality—a tradition which goes back centuries if not millennia. To a considerable extent the belief that low castes are born to labour with their hands, and high castes to enjoy the fruits of others' labour, is accepted by the former as well as the latter. The separation between proprietorship and physical cultivation both draws sanction from and serves to reinforce the caste structure of rural society.

What we have here in India today, then, is an unique agrarian structure. It represents a blending of remnants from the pre-British economic order (including, above all, the claim of the State to a share of the produce of the land,) together with modern Western concepts of private property. The result has been a layering of rights from those of the State as super-landlord (or ultimate owner) down through those of the sub-landlords (penultimate owners) to those of the several tiers

*Reproduced from *The Agrarian Prospect in India* by Daniel Thorner, pp. 10-13.

of tenants. Both the State and the superior holders exercise the right to draw income from the soil in the form of rents wherever possible the tenants also try to subsist by collecting rents from the working cultivators with rights inferior to their own.

The maintenance of this hierarchical structure of interests in the land has required, in effect, that quite a substantial proportion of the produce be reserved for persons who perform no agricultural labour. What was left to the actual cultivator, after the claims of the various superior right holders were satisfied, might still be subject to collection as unpaid debt by the moneylender. The mechanism for the enforcement of this withdrawal of the great bulk of the product from the primary producers was provided by the new body of written law, the courts, the police, the promulgation of ordinances, and so forth. In the end, the working kisan was left with no surplus to invest in better implements, improved seed or fertilizer, and in any case no real incentive to increase his productivity. Since his tenure was in most cases insecure, it was scarcely worth his while to think of undertaking long-term improvements. For the landless mazdur, there was even less point to any attempt to raise his efficiency.

Both the harassed small-holder and the down-trodden labourer, seeing before them little prospect of a betterment of their condition, concentrated rather on warding off a worsening. So far as any changes might be proposed, their attitude was typically one of a stubborn and suspicious conservatism. The superior right holders, from whom a more progressive approach might have been expected, were interested in agriculture only to the extent that they might continue to draw their incomes from it.

Typically they found it more profitable to rent out their lands than to manage them personally. Clearly it was not worth their while to invest capital in agricultural operations so long as these operations were to be left in the hands of the most backward and ill-educated villagers. On the other hand, as members of higher castes, they preferred not to think in terms of undertaking the "degrading" field work themselves. The primary aim of all classes in the agrarian structure has been not to increase their income by adopting more efficient methods, but to rise in social prestige by abstaining insofar as possible from physical labour.

This complex of legal, economic, and social relations uniquely typical of the Indian countryside served to produce an effect which I should like to call that of a built-in "depressor." Though the operation of this multi-faceted "depressor," Indian agriculture continued to be charac-

terized by low capital intensity and antiquated methods. Few of the actual tillers were left with an efficacious interest in modernization, or the prevention of such recognized evils as fragmentation. The pattern of landholding, cultivation, and product sharing operated to hold down agricultural production. From the 1880's to the 1940's total output rose so slowly that it would not be too strong to speak of stagnation. The income of the *kisans* and *mazdurlog* (i.e. the overwhelming bulk of the rural population) remained at or below the subsistence level. For the newly developing urban manufacturing sector, this in turn constituted a serious handicap in the form of a severely restricted Indian home market. It is difficult to see how India's current plans for economic development can get very far without a concerted effort to remove the "depressor."

III

THE LANDLORD AND THE MONEY-LENDER*

The bigger landlord has ways which conform with those of the money-lender, and indeed, as we have said, he is often the money-lender or trader himself. The village headman is often drawn from the same class, and it is usual for these to have connexions which links them not only to the sources of finance but to the seats of administrative power. Subordinate officials, revenue and other—including those of the relatively low-paid co-operative department—have no alternative but to stay with these village lenders and be dependent on them for ordinary amenities when they visit the village or camp in it for a few days. In this and other ways is initiated a process of association with those who wield power and influence in the village and who for that reason have their own uses as the local instruments of an administration which resides in towns and cities and which in varying degrees is inaccessible to the ordinary villager. This close conformity of association and interests between the subordinate officials of Government and the more powerful elements in the village is to be borne in mind as of great significance in explaining the failure of implementation of the policies and directives, co-operative or other, emanating from the higher levels of administration.

Sometimes, temporarily overawed by superior official authority or enthused by missionary-minded officers, an important measure of co-operative policy, for example, may in fact be translated into practice in the village; but it is not often that the effect is lasting; frequently the directions merely remain on paper, especially when they involve some disadvantage to the more powerful in the village. Acting in concert with these, the subordinate official, whose functions take him to the village, creates for the benefit of the superior officers what might be called the illusion of implementation woven round the reality of non-compliance.

Several factors in the village help to create this effect, not least among them the powerful influence of caste. If the leader is of a particular caste, it is unusual for others of the caste in the village to report to superior authority that things are otherwise than as reported by the village leader and the subordinate official. This marked tendency toward the promotion of an impression of change around changelessness of active obedience to behest around solid resistance

*Reproduced from The General Report of Committee of Direction of All-India Rural Credit Survey—Volume II, pp. 277-278.

to instructions, which only the most persistent and detailed supervision from above can check, has always to be taken into account in assessing the worth of reports that the policies of Government have been put into operation in the village.

The consideration is one which must qualify both satisfaction and belief when it is found stated, for example, of a particular area, that tenancy laws have been enforced, or that moneylenders are not operating without due authorization, or that co-operative societies are actively functioning from year to year. The *status quo* and the non-compliance are often achieved conjointly and at great effort by leading elements in the village and the subordinate agencies of Government. The balance attained may be the result of some completely new alignment of forces, of some new distribution of perquisites, or of some new passing of 'consideration.' The persons who suffer in this process are the weaker and disadvantaged elements of the village for whose benefit the directives and policies are conceived.

IV

TWO POWERFUL CLASSES IN AGRARIAN AREAS*

D. R. GADGIL

It is often said that the Indian countryside requires an economic and social revolution. It is necessary to be specific about the nature of this revolution. Economic power in the countryside is today exercised chiefly by two elements. The first of these is represented by the trader-money-lender class who chiefly profit from all opportunities of gain connected with the finance of agricultural production and with trading in the countryside. This element is connected chiefly with the urban trading and financial communities and acts as their representative in the countryside. The other element is that of the substantial landlords and farmers, say, the top 10 per cent. These are ordinarily holders of land as also cultivators of it on a comparatively large scale and they usually wield considerable political and social power. In some instances the two elements would have much in common and may act together closely. In many areas, however, they would be separate.

The problems of change involved in the two cases are different and different types of programmes have to be devised for them. In relation to the operations of the trader-money-lending interest, the programme now adopted appears to be that of strengthening co-operative efforts in the spheres of both agricultural finance and marketing with extended emphasis on processing activities; the co-operatives are to be helped by direct State activity in storage and warehousing of agricultural produce and, perhaps, also in purchase of agricultural products at a later stage. This programme, if successful, would still not affect the position of the top agriculturists. They would be left as strong as before; actually their position may become stronger as a result of the diminution of the influence of traders and money-landers if in the co-operatives which take their place the top cultivator elements are dominant. Such domination on their part may indeed be expected and would ordinarily take place unless special efforts are made to obviate it.

The present position of the top agriculturists depends on their command of extensive land areas and will continue as long as this command lasts. Therefore, their position could be affected only by certain types of land reform proposals.

*Reproduced from the article Gramdan-Implications and Possibilities, "Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics," Vol. XII. No. 4, pp. 1-3.

Both these programmes, that of land reform and of co-operative development, are today largely paper programmes. It is indeed possible that they may be seriously whittled down even before they are launched. It is clear that there are today powerful forces operating at the highest level working for the retention of the trader-money-lender class in rural India. Two recent events may be noted which are of significance in this connection. The first is the keenness of many in authority to ensure the continuance of the operations of the private trader even in the handling of foodgrains. The second is the attack on the whole programme of strengthening of co-operative primary units by making their sizes economic and by supplying them initially with required financial resources by contributions from the State. The opposition takes the form of raising a cry of voluntarism. It safely ignores or deliberately shuts its eyes to the universal lesson, specially emphasised by experience in India, that the unaided activities of the poor and the weak can make no advance against the heavily entrenched position of the trader-money-lender classes. The plea for small uneconomic single village units and for denying financial aid to primaries of poor peasants, in a country where all the largest industrial units have been established through and maintained by sacrifices imposed on the consumers and have been given all kinds of State aid including concessional finance, appears no more than an unsuccessful attempt at concealing the real intentions of those who want to maintain the *status quo*. The great difficulty of doing anything effective in the matter of land reform shows the strength of the other element which is powerful in the countryside. The basic sterility of the community projects administration stems from its inability and unwillingness to do anything which will affect the position and interests of these two entrenched classes. The approach of the C.P.A. is illustrated by a recent survey which revealed that the C.P.A. was unwilling to encourage the scheduled castes to assert their constitutional guarantee of legal and civic rights.

The position may be summarised as follows. There is a general agreement that economic, political and social progress must rapidly take place in the countryside. At present there is, in fact, very unequal distribution of rural resources and the benefits of the better terms of trade for agriculture have most largely accrued to the financing, trader-money-lender classes and next, in some measure, to big cultivators. A change in this situation and a rapid movement forward in production could take place only if there is a more even distribution of productive resources, greater economic strength on the part of the smaller units leading to ability to withstand pressures from either the top cultivators' strata or the money-lender-trader classes and a concentration of the finance, trading and processing of agricultural production in the hands of the cultivating community itself. In order to achieve these ends there are planned programmes of land reform and of co-operative development and there is a special agency,

the Community Projects Administration charged with the responsibility of promoting technical improvement and welfare.

Barring the abolition of Zamindari, which in itself does not complete land reform but merely brings the problem in the older Zamindari areas conceptually to the same level as in the Ryotwari areas, no great success has yet been achieved in the programme of land reform. In many States comprehensive legislation on well established principles is itself lacking. Where legislation is satisfactory the implementation of the tenancy provisions is either weak or the local land-owning classes have successfully circumvented it. The programme of redistribution of land and the strengthening of the uneconomic units by some sort of pooling of land and other resources lags in every way, far behind even the tenancy aspect of land reform. Programmes of co-operative development in relation to finance, marketing and processing have made some headway in States where already non-official co-operation was strong and had some idea of the nature of the problem faced by it. In other States the progress is far from satisfactory and there is likelihood of the programme in this regard meeting heavy weather in the near future. The Community Projects Administration is unable to take any action which vitally affect the interests of existing powerful groups of rural society. There is no prospect, therefore, of any immediate large scale socio-economic change in the countryside and this is so simply because there is no desire for any such change among those who hold economic and political power. It is only when pressures generate from below and discontent with existing conditions comes to surface that the formally accepted programmes could become alive.

V

THE LANDLESS LABOURER AND THE PATTERN OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE*

TARLOK SINGH

I

Among the most critical of the problems which face under-developed countries is the position of that section of the population commonly described as landless or agricultural labourers. Conditions in different countries are not of course identical, but many of the processes at work and the practical problems are common enough to permit a fairly general analysis of the nature of the conflicts involved and the possible directions in which developments could occur. In this paper some illustrative facts are taken from India, but the experience from which inferences are drawn extends over a wider field.

The 'level of development' of a country is a complex of several different social, economic and political elements and, just as there are vast dissimilarities between one under-developed country and another, within the same country several different levels of development are to be found. The problems of landless labourers are related therefore both to the growth of the economy of which they form part and to the existence of varying levels of development within the economy. The factors which determine the rate of economic development of a country and those which influence relative internal levels are in part independent, in part dependent on one another. In the past there was little conscious attempt to relate the two. In the conditions of India and other countries similarly placed it is the purpose of planning to achieve a high rate of economic development and at the same time to ensure that various sections of the population do not long remain at such varying levels of development and standards of living and culture as to render the entire social structure unstable.

This is the crux of the problem of development in Southern Asia. There may be several measures of success or failure, but from many points of view, the future of landless labourers will serve as one of the surest tests and may well prove to be a decisive factor in determining the approach and methods which will eventually prevail. It is not generally appreciated how large a stake the community as a whole

*Reproduced from "Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology," 1956, Vols. I-II, pp. 278-281.

has in what becomes of landless labourers in the next few years. Many of the major challenges with which India and several other countries are confronted express themselves in their most concentrated form in the conditions and immediate prospects of landless labourers. Current challenges may be better understood if seen against the background of the social processes which have been in operation during several decades. These could perhaps be grouped conveniently under four heads—impact of the west, development of internal capitalism, growth of population and increasing disintegration of the rural social structure.

II

In relation to landless labourers all these processes together converge at two principal points—place in the social structure and employment opportunity. The impact of the west upon the village came slowly and indirectly. Western goods, supported as they were by the prestige of alien rule, gradually broke down the self-sufficient and inter-dependent character of the village economy. New goods introduced in the village through the pedlar and the merchant reduced the demand for village-produced goods, bringing a steadily increasing proportion of artisans into the ranks of agricultural labourers. Western ideas of property, born of the nineteenth century *laissez faire* and competition, along with the growth of the money economy, introduced something new into the village—the acquisitive spirit, the element of exploitation under legal cover of the weak by the strong, wealth and income as the scale of values and the decline both in the sense of social obligation and in the claims of the community upon the individual. Seeds sown under the influence of the west flourished through indigenous agencies and developed a life of their own. New towns sprang up and old ones expanded through export of new materials and import of manufactured goods, development of communications and the growth of settled administration. In these conditions, an internal capitalism grew up, its three main elements being foreign interests engaged in trade and industry, Indian merchants who took to industry and found steady support in nationalism, and rural capitalism expressed through the growth of moneylending as well as landlordism. Establishment of oil mills, rice mills, and flour mills in rural areas and trade in products of new industries seeking out the rural market reduced traditional work-opportunities, both full-time and part-time. Rural capitalism reinforced feudalism and turned sections of peasant owners into tenants and tenants into casual labourers.

The growth of population accentuated the economic effects of both western economic influence and of indigenous capitalism. During the past sixty years or more the population dependent on agriculture has increased, not diminished. Between 1931 and 1951 the population dependent on agriculture is estimated to have increased from 193

Tanjore was of interest to me because it is, for South India, one of the main centres of the Saivite religion and of orthodox Brahmanical culture. Its magnificent temples, the best of which were built by Chola kings in the tenth and eleventh centuries, are famous throughout India. Religious instrumental music and singing are much patronized: thousands flock annually to the musical festival in honour of Tyaga Raja Bhagavatar, a famous Brahman songster. The Tanjore Tevatiyans, or temple dancers until recently carried on a magnificent tradition of Bharata Natya dancing in the larger temples dedicated to Visnu or to Siva. Though public temple dancing was prohibited about fifteen years ago because of its association with prostitution, it is exhibited at private concerts, and several Tanjore dancing girls are now film stars well known in the Tamil country. In some areas the land in whole groups of villages, comprising up to six thousand acres, is owned by important temples, dedicated chiefly to Siva and managed by Brahman trustees. Altogether the Brahmans, who number about one fifteenth of the population, are in this district more numerous, wealthy, and influential than elsewhere in the Tamil country.

While Sanskrit learning has been conserved by the Brahmans, Tanjore shares with the neighbouring district of Madura an illustrious heritage of Tamil religious literature extending back to the pre-Christian Era and developed by both Brahman and Non-Brahman castes. In the last twenty years much animosity has arisen between Brahman and higher caste non-Brahman scholars, professional men, politicians, and also landowners, so that an attempt is often made to divide into two traditions the literary and religious heritage of the Tamil country. The higher Non-Brahmans and particularly the Vellalans claim honour for indigenous Tamil literature, ignoring its debt to Vedanta philosophy and the Sanskrit Saivite texts, or Agamas. The Saivite Brahmans, by contrast, tend to emphasise their unique heritage of the Vedas and Vedanta philosophy, to some extent neglect those Tamil saints who were not Brahmans, and favour the monistic Advaita metaphysic.

While so famous in religious and literary history, Tanjore is today looked down on by the more "progressive" Western-educated Tamils of neighbouring districts. Having no machine industries, Tanjore town lacks the amenities of other more industrialized district capitals such as Trichinopoly, Coimbatore, and, of course, Madras. The old-fashioned religious orthodoxy of Tanjore Brahmans, their stranglehold on much of the land, their general opposition to land reform and welfare movements among the lowest castes, and their apparent arrogance, cunning, and tortuousness in philosophical arguments are mocked in other districts. The "Kumbakonam," the name of the second town of the district, where orthodox Brahmans are particularly influential, has come to mean "Humbug" or "Bunkum" among the educated in Madras. The wealthier Vellalan, Kallan, and immigrant Telugu Non-

Brahman landowners of the district have a similar reputation for backwardness in social reforms. Among these higher castes in general (though many, since independence, pay lip service to Congress ideology) it is probably true to say that very few are ardent in implementing its policies. The comparative lethargy of the higher castes with regard to economic development, coupled with a general increase in the population over the last hundred years and a particularly marked increase owing to immigration from the neighbouring famine areas during the bad harvests of the last five, have recently created acute economic distress among landless labourers and small tenant farmers of the lower castes. The spectacular rise of the Communist party in the last five years issues partly from these circumstances. In response to angry rebellion among labourers, the Madras Government passed an emergency ordinance in September, 1952, requiring security of tenure for share-cropping tenants, an increase in the tenant's share of paddy crops from approximately one-fifth to two-fifths, and for permanently employed, tied labourers, an increase in wages which in some villages amounted to a doubling of the traditional rates of pay. This ordinance, while it appeared temporarily to appease the small tenant and the permanent labourer, did nothing to change conditions for the ever increasing number of Adi Dravidas and low-caste Non-Brahman landless coolies who are hired by the day. Labour relations were still exceedingly tense when I left the district in April, 1953, and the Communist party appeared by that date to have enrolled most of the Adi Dravidas as members.

II. KUMBAPETTAI, A TANJORE VILLAGE

Kumbapettai, the Brahman village studied, lies eight miles north of Tanjore town about two hundred miles south-west of Madras, and three miles west of the Madras to Tanjore railway. In the centre of the village is a single street containing thirty-six occupied and twelve-unoccupied Brahman houses. The Brahmans living in the village are small landowners, apart from six families who have recently sold their lands. Holdings of wet paddy on the outskirts of the village range from three to thirty acres per family. Near the Brahman street are three streets of Non-Brahman tenants and servant castes, comprising twenty houses of Konan tenants and cowherds; seven of Kallan paddy merchants and small cultivators; twelve of Toddy-tappers, cultivators since prohibition; six of recently arrived Ahambatiyan and Pataiyatchi tenants; four of Anti Temple Priests; three of Potters; one of Tevatiyan prostitutes and low-caste temple dancers; four of Ambalakkaran fishermen; two of Maratha coolies; one of Blacksmiths, one of Goldsmiths, and one of Carpenters; two of Barbers; one of Washermen; one of Muslim watchmen; and one of Gypsies, who are now employed by the government as road-sweepers.

The bulk of agricultural labour is done by landless labourers, formerly serfs, of the Pallan caste, who live in eighty-nine houses in five streets, beyond paddy fields, outside the village proper. Kumbapettai has no Parayans but employs two families from the next village to remove dead cattle and beat drums at funerals.

In considering the structure of social relations within this village, we may take as our central problem : To what extent is Kumbapettai an isolable social unit ? And to what extent is it changing in this respect ? I propose to discuss this problem briefly with reference to economic organization, local administration, ritual practices at the village level, intercastes relations of a social nature within the village and some general relations of the village to the wider community.

Within living memory, and I take as my date line the period between forty and fifty years ago, it is clear that Kumbapettai has been much more self-sufficient than it is today. Until about twenty years ago Brahman families living in the village owned all the village lands and held economic control over their tenants and Adi Dravida labourers. Forty years ago, all Non-Brahmans of Kumbapettai were either tenants of Brahmans or specialized village servants working for Brahmans and each other. Konans, the dominant Non-Brahman caste of the village at the date, leased land on an annual share-cropping tenure from Brahmans, from which they retained roughly one-fifth of the crop for their maintenance and cultivation expenses. In addition, some worked as cowherds and gardeners for Brahmans and were paid monthly in paddy. Those fields not given over to tenants, that is to say, about two-thirds of the village land, were cultivated directly by Adi Dravidas among whom each man was attached as a tied labourer, or pannaiyal, to a Brahman landlord. He was paid daily in paddy and, in addition, was perpetually in debt to the landlord for extra amounts granted at marriages, births, and funerals. Both tenants and labourers received annual gifts of clothing, materials to rethatch their huts, built on sites owned by the landlords, and extra food in time of sickness or in the summer famine months. Part of the labourer's paddy was exchanged for toddy, tapped by the Toddy-tappers, who leased their coconut gardens from Brahmans. The village servant castes of Barbers, Washermen, Goldsmiths, Blacksmiths, and Temple Priests, and the village watchmen appointed by the landlords, were paid in kind by both landlords and tenants twice annually after each harvest.

Today, Kumbapettai has moved about half-way in the transition from this relatively stationary feudal subsistence economy to a much wider-scale, expanding capitalist economy. First, one-third of the land has in the last twenty years been sold by impoverished Brahmans to more prosperous traders or professional men of Tanjore and neighbouring towns. Further, twelve Brahman families who have

houses and own lands in the village have temporarily emigrated to towns, some to Madras, where they work as clerks in government offices, as teachers, or as vegetarian restaurant owners. Some of these absentee landowners come home twice annually at harvest to receive rent in kind from their tenants; others give their land on subtenure to Brahman kinsmen within the village, who make a small profit on the rent they receive from the tenants. Nine out of sixty-seven Non-Brahman men now lease land from landlords living outside the village and are no longer under the economic control of their traditional administrators.

Other Non-Brahmans have become partly or totally emancipated from the feudal system in modern forms of work. Most of the seven Kallan households, descendants of one who came fifty years ago, earn a living as paddy merchants, buying paddy from Brahmans and carting it to the mill three miles away. Two Kallans, two Toddy-tappers, one Potter, and five Konans—that is to say, ten out of sixty-seven Non-Brahman men—have managed to buy between one and four acres of land from Brahmans, which they cultivate themselves. None out of sixty-seven men work in other ways independently of Brahmans: three have teashops, and two have small grocery shops in the village; one has a teashop in the town three miles away; one Muslim is the watchman of some coconut gardens in the village which have been bought by another Muslim of Tanjore; and two men are wage-earners in a cigar factory in the nearby town. Only eleven men lease land from owners within the village, while nine are tied labourers, and ten are daily coolies. Thus, altogether, only 63 per cent of Non-Brahman men are now economically dependent on Brahman landowners within the village.

Among Adi Dravidas, too, revolutionary changes have taken place. Only 22 per cent now work as tied labourers for payment in kind. One family now owns one acre of land, 38 per cent have in the last ten years become share-croppers on the same terms as the Non-Brahmans, while 39 per cent work as daily coolies for whoever—Brahman, non-Brahman, or outsider—will employ them, and receive their wages in cash. Even tied labourers, since paddy rationing was instituted in the war and landlords were subject to procurement regulations, are obliged to receive part of their pay in cash.

These economic changes within the village are accompanied by a great increase in economic transactions outside it. Members of all castes, when they can afford it, now patronize the cinema in Tanjore and in the nearby town; all travel on buses and trains to buy clothing or household goods, which have increased both in amount and in kind. Few families now receive clothing from their landlords; most are required to buy it from the town themselves. Most important, the village as a whole is now in debt to the town. In short, the

village is annually participating to an increasing extent in the wider urban economy. This change, as everywhere in India, is part of the over-all change from a feudal to an expanding capitalist economic system, and is the fundamental prerequisite, in my view, for most other modern changes in the pattern of social relations within the village.

In this traditional system Brahmans have administrative rights over all the lower castes. Among their Non-Brahman and Adi Dravida servants, Brahmans have the power forcibly to interfere in disputes which threaten the peace of the village and to punish rebellion in any form against their own authority. These vary between fines, paid to the temple funds; beating with sticks, administered by Brahmans; in more serious cases, the penalty of forcing the culprit to drink a pint of cowdung or even human dung dissolved in water; and in the most serious cases, eviction from the land. Sometimes whole streets or caste groups offend against village custom.

In connection with the unity of the village, the important point is that Brahmans were until recently, by reason of their economic power, able to prevent disputes within their village from passing into the hands of the local police, or, alternatively, to negotiate with the police in such a way that their own authority, and traditional custom, were upheld.

Even murder cases have in the past been handled according to the Brahmans' decision.

But today Brahmans complain that with the gradual loss of their economic power over the lower castes the loyalty of tenants and labourers is no longer what it was, and the unity of the village is declining.

In other ways, the breakdown of the feudal economic system, the emergence of lower-caste groups in economic rivalry rather than co-operation, and the widening range of social relations beyond the village have endangered the power of the Brahmans and the unity of Kumbapettai. In the past, though the headman of each lower-caste street were elected by street member, Brahmans reserved the right to depose a low-caste headman if he displeased them in any way. But in recent years it has been impossible for Brahmans to interfere in the street administration of the two newest Non-Brahman streets. In these two streets the Kallan, Konan and Toddy-tapper households are almost all economically independent of Brahmans and conduct their street affairs without consulting Brahman opinion. During my stay, when the all-India elections took place, only members of these streets dared openly to admit that they had voted for the Communists, against the Congress-supporting Brahmans. Their

own Non-Brahman tenants and Pallan labourers were marshalled by the Brahmans on voting day and instructed to vote for Congress, though it was doubted whether all had complied. Shortly after I left the village, however, in September, 1952, the Tanjore Tenants' and Labourers' Ordinance increased the economic strength of tenants and Pallans and removed from them the fear of eviction by their landlords. At the next harvest, in February, 1953, I heard, while working in a second village sixty miles away, that Kumbapettai Pallans had emerged in a body against their landlords, hoisted the Communist flag in their street, and refused to thresh the village paddy until higher wages were promised for daily coolies as well as for tied labourers of the village to whom the act strictly applied. In the area where I was then working in the east of the district, the Adi Dravidas of twelve neighbouring villages had already three years ago formed a Communist-controlled union in open opposition to their landlords, along the lines of their traditional street assemblies.

The unity of the village was formerly dramatized in ritual at the annual temple festival to Uritaicciyamman, the mother-goddess of the village. This goddess like all village deities, is a Non-Brahman deity; though she is worshiped by Brahmans and is regarded by them as an aspect of Sakti, the consort of Siva, it is clear that she is not one of the Sanskrit pantheon. Annually, however, at the large temple festival, all castes combine in rituals which are sponsored by the Brahmans and conducted by both Brahman and Non-Brahman temple priests. This festival dramatizes the unity of the village and also the separateness and ritual rank of each caste within it.

But in the year of my stay this festival was for the first time not conducted. Brahmans, who are responsible for organizing and collecting funds from villagers, complained that their several families, many of whose more influential members have left the village, would not co-operate together and that the state of unrest among tenants and labourers made them fear disputes and possibly violence if they attempted to enforce the traditional ranked participation of all the castes. I heard that the festival was, however, conducted the following year, but that not all castes had taken part. It is clear that village festivals of this type are dying out all over the district; in many villages in the eastern part of Tanjore District they were abandoned five years ago. At the same time, the last twenty years have seen a growth in importance of the large temple festivals to Sanskrit deities, formerly managed by Brahmans, in the major towns of the district. To these festivals, where, since the Temple Entry Act of 1947, caste rank is no longer emphasised, thousands flock by bus and train to witness the spectacle of the processions and the firework displays. Even these festivals, however, are now losing their appeal for the lower castes, among whom they are associated with the supre-

macy of Brahmans and with religious doctrines in which they no longer have faith. Changes in ritual co-operation thus show a widening of social relations and a tendency toward new homogeneity in ritual practices of Brahmans and the higher Non-Brahman castes, yet at the same time the emergence of a new, low class of unbelievers who pin their faith rather to rebellious political action. Among organized Communist groups of Adi Dravidas in the east of the district the younger leaders pursue an active policy of anti-religious and anti-Brahman propaganda, and here ritual co-operation within the village is almost confined to the higher castes.

The vertical unity of the village has always been counterbalanced by the horizontal unity of each endogamous sub-caste. Traditionally, each caste group of the village appears to have belonged to an endogamous subcaste extending over some fifteen to thirty villages. For at least forty to fifty years, however, with the vast increase in population, and the influx of newcomers and movement of small Brahman and Non-Brahman groups over all parts of the district, whole streets or individual families of the endogamous subcaste have become very widely scattered. The Brahmans of Kumbapettai thus today belong to a subcaste of eighteen villages fairly widely scattered round the North Tanjore and Trichinopoly boundary. Many of their individual families are also now settled in towns up to one hundred miles away who are visited by bus or train at family ceremonies. The Pallan endogamous caste group is still confined largely to villages within a radius of twenty miles, but isolated families are scattered farther afield. In Kumbapettai no intercaste marriages have yet taken place, but in other respects accidental contiguity and similarity of economic status are replacing kinship ties as organizing principles within and between village. Thus the three traditional Non-Brahman street, once occupied respectively by cowherds, various servant castes, and Toddy-tappers, now each contains immigrant families of other castes who dine with the traditional occupants at ceremonies and combine to elect the street headman. A fourth most modern street on the main roadside, sprung up in the last eighty years, contains families of six Non-Brahman castes, about two-thirds of whom are independent of the traditional landowners, and most of whom dine together at each other's ceremonies. Pallans and Brahmans, at the two extremes, are still isolated in their streets, but each group contains two or three families of recent immigrants, of other endogamous subcastes within the same broad caste, to whom dining rights are extended. In each wider endogamous caste, by contrast, all but the closest kinship ties are gradually being weakened by the increasing heterogeneity of wealth, education, and occupation.

All these changes in the broad pattern of village organization have their effect on everyday social relations between the several castes. In Kumbapettai the fact that two-thirds of the land is still

owned by Brahmans and that about 75 per cent of the population is still employed in traditional ways accounts, in contrast to some other villages, for the comparatively orthodox etiquette still preserved in relations between members of different castes. Thus Non-Brahmans and Adi Dravida labourers still come to the back door of a house to receive their wages, and Adi Dravidas still do not enter the Brahman street or, of course, the Brahman temples. Brahmans and most Non-Brahmans do not enter the Adi Dravida Streets. In the last twenty years, a considerable relaxing of caste restrictions has taken place. Non-Brahmans were formerly forbidden to enter Brahman houses; both men and women now work as house servants for their landlords, though they may enter the kitchen. Non-Brahmans were formerly forbidden to wear shoes while walking in the Brahman street or standing before a Brahman. But today two Non-Brahman boys whose fathers are independent of the landlords walk deliberately in their shoes down the Brahman street to post letters in the mailbox. These boys, one Adi Dravida, and thirteen Brahman boys attend high school three miles away, where caste discrimination is forbidden. In particular, no group now has power to excommunicate serious offenders against caste law. But today they are condemned but not ostracized.

In the east of the district it is among Communist groups and particularly Adi Dravidas that caste restrictions have broken down most completely. Non-Brahman Communist leaders go freely into Adi Dravida streets, eat with them, and spend the night in their huts. In the second village where I worked, Pallans and Parayans of twelve villages had in the last five years completely abandoned their age-long dispute for precedence, ate freely together, assembled together at large areal Communist meetings, supported each other in strikes to gain higher wages from landlords, and within each village, together settled their disputes concerning debt and adultery. In this district, in fact, so weak is the propagation of Congress policy regarding caste, and so strong the Communist that any person who attempts to defy caste laws is promptly hailed as a Communist.

III. CONCLUSION

It is clear that, in general, the social structure of the Tanjore village is changing from a relatively closed, stationary system, with a feudal economy and co-operation between ranked castes in ways ordained by religious law, to a relatively "open," changing system, governed by secular law, with an expanding capitalist economy and competition between castes which is sometimes reinforced and some-

times obscured by the new struggle between economic classes. In perhaps ten years, even if there is no Communist revolution in the meantime, it is questionable whether the village will any longer be a useful isolate for study. Certainly, it is difficult even now to speak meaningfully of modern economic relations within the village without reference to broader government policies—for example, of rice rationing, procurement of surplus paddy, admittance of students to high schools and colleges communal representation in government employment, and government attempts to readjust the relations between landlords and tenants. It is equally difficult to speak of social and administrative relations between castes without reference to the rise of the Communist party since 1947 or to the earlier development of anti-Brahman political movements. All the more need, therefore, to record what we can of the traditional structure of village before this has quite decayed.

III

THE CHANGING STATUS OF A DEPRESSED CASTE*

BERNARD S. COHN

This paper describes attempts by the members of one "untouchable" caste in one village to raise their social status. The caste is the *Camars*, traditionally Leather workers and agricultural labourers, who have long stood near the bottom of the regional society of Uttar Pradesh in wealth, power, and caste position. Attempts by the *Camars* of Madhopur (*Mādhopūr*) village to achieve a higher status must be understood in relation to changes both in the village and in the outside world as well as in relation to the *Camars'* own internal, social and religious organization. This paper offers a preliminary analysis of some of the complex processes which are involved.

THE VILLAGE AND ITS ECONOMY

Madhopur is a large, Rajput-owned village of 1,047 acres on the level Ganges-Gomti plain. It is located in Kerakat Tahsil in the south-eastern part of Jaunpur District, U.P. In Madhopur village the agricultural lands are about equally divided between the production of rice and the production of other grains such as barley and millets, with sugarcane as a leading cash crop. The village is two miles from an all-weather road and bus route which connects it with the cities of Banaras and Azamgarh, twenty-five and thirty-eight miles distant, respectively. It is four miles from the nearest railway, which provides transportation to Jaunpur, the ancient district centre (Nevill 1908:1-3). Kerakat town, the subdivisional headquarters for Madhopur, having a population of about 5,000 persons, is four miles away. Description of the traditional village of Madhopur and of recent changes there have been published previously by Opler and Singh.

The *Camars* of Madhopur are the most numerous of the twenty-three principal caste groups which are resident there. Among the 1,852 persons enumerated by the village accountant in his census of 1948, five castes were represented by more than 50 members each: *Camars* (636), and *Lohars* (67). Eleven other local caste groups had less than 20 members each.

*Reproduced from the article The Changing Status of A Depressed Caste, from "Village India," edited by McKim Marriott, pp. 53-76.

The twenty-three local caste groups of Madhopur are distributed in one main settlement and in nine hamlets in a manner which approximately symbolizes their relative standings in Madhopur society.

Camars, like all other castes of Madhopur, have long been subordinate in all economic and political affairs to the Thakur landlords (*Zamindars*) of the village. These Thakurs, Rajputs of the Raghubansi clan, have held predominant economic and political power in Madhopur since the conquest of the village and the region by their ancestors in the sixteenth century.

Zamindari Abolition in 1952 did little to affect the economic and political dominance of the Thakurs either in Madhopur or in the immediate region, for it expropriated the landlords only from that part of their tenanted lands which had not previously been registered as being under their own personal cultivation. In 1953, after landlord abolition, Thakur ex-landlords still owned and cultivated approximately 70 per cent of the lands of Madhopur. The few permanent tenants in the village were enabled to buy out their parts of the Thakurs' landlord holdings by payment to the state government of ten-times the annual rent, but the landlords who lost land thereby are to be compensated by the government. Some ex-landlords, moreover, continue to receive rent from their now protected tenants-at-will. Although the old legal bases of tenancy under landlords ceased to exist in 1952, most non-Thakur families continue to gain access to land only as lessees under Thakurs.

RECENT CHANGE

By the early part of the twentieth century the seeds of social change had been extensively sown; a railroad had been built near Madhopur, affording wider geographic mobility; boys had left the village to go to colleges and universities; the official courts settled more and more village disputes; the Arya Samaj movement of religious reform grew strong; elections brought political competition on a wider scale; and the nationalist struggle became a reality for the villagers. Along with these outside influences, population in the village and surrounding area steadily rose, because of strains on the village economy, more and more residents from all castes began to seek work in the cities. Family structure, political behaviour, attitudes towards caste status, and religious customs have all undergone notable change. All these happenings are summed up by the remark often heard in the village, "A new wind is blowing."

A. CHANGE IN FAMILY STRUCTURE

The Thakurs of Madhopur, and following them at some distance the Camars, have been slowly reshaping their respective family struc-

tures. Among the Thakurs, family ties have grown looser and the importance of clan and village has declined. Thakurs are tending to move in the direction of less formality and respect for the father, more freedom between husband and wife, and smaller household units. The stimuli of Western education and urban living have been strongly felt among them.

The small changes in family structure that can be noted among the Camars, especially among Camars who have attained some education, are not changes in the direction of a Western-influenced family but changes in the direction of a more orthodox "Hindu" family. Camars are trying to tighten the authority of the father and place restrictions on the wife. While Thakur wife is coming out of seclusion, the Camar wife is being put into seclusion. The Thakur model for the family appears to be influenced by the urban, Western family, while the Camar model is based on the family of the Thakurs fifty years ago. A similar chronological sequence and typological discrepancy is evident between Thakur and Camar models for caste observances, religion, food habits, and many other aspects of social life.

B. POLITICAL CHANGES

The twentieth century saw the break-up of the Thakur panchayats which had once dominated both the village of Madhopur and the whole taluka of Dobhi. The decline of these panchayats may be related to changes throughout the whole social fabric but may be attributed particularly to changes in the prestige system of the Thakurs and in the formal superstructure of government.

Since 1900 more and more Thakurs had begun to derive incomes and prestige from working outside the village as teachers, police inspectors, printers, and businessmen rather than from the traditional sources of landownership and from agnatic and affinal family ties. Such externally oriented persons were much less at the mercy of the sanctioning pressures which any rural panchayats could apply. Outcasting lost its sting for the Thakurs, for an outcaste Thakur family could with increasing ease make marriage alliances with other outcaste families or with families in good standing whose desire to establish marriage ties with a Raghubansi family outweighed their scruples about the stigma of outcasting. The legal, economic, and prestige structures of the village and taluka were ceasing to exist as a closed and integrated system, but the Thakurs were at the same time learning how to exercise their power at new and higher levels. The higher administrators, if they are not Thakurs themselves, tend to be of high caste and often of landowning backgrounds, so that their sympathies generally lie with landlords rather than with tenants.

While the authority of Thakur panchayats began to grow weaker, caste organization among the Camars if anything grew stronger. As patron-client and landlord-tenant ties have weakened, Camars have come to depend more upon themselves for the settlement of their own disputes. Camars have also grown more sensitive about their collective good name. It was a commonplace a generation ago for a Thakur man to have sexual relations with a Camar woman. This still occurs, but the caste is now trying to punish offenders. Eating and drinking restrictions for the Camars have been tightened and are strictly enforced. Although Camars formerly would eat with and take water from other untouchables, they now punish such acts by out-casting. As the Camar caste has grown stronger, outcasting by the Camar panchayat has actually become more frequent.

The beginnings of elections, first for the District Board in the twenties, later for the legislative positions of the provincial and central governments in the thirties, helped further to weaken the Thakurs' local and taluka panchayats, while they gave still further stimulus to action by Camars and other lower castes.

District boards had been set up in India in the eighties to give the people some small measure of self-government. The initial electorates for these boards were very small, however, and many members of the boards were either officials or appointees of officials. Only in the twenties, when elective representation was increased, did there begin to be competition among some of the Dobhi Thakurs for election to positions on the Jaunpur District Board. To secure votes, candidates had to promise help and support to factions among the chiefs of the Dobhi Taluka panchayat. Both the Thakurs who were candidates and the chiefs of the panchayat who were allied with them lost their reputations for honesty and impartiality in these elections. Like outside employment and litigation, election to the District Board offered an extra-village and extra-taluka source of power and prestige. Members had control of rural education, sanitation, and roads as well as access to higher government officials whom they could influence to the advantage of themselves and their friends and supporters. Village and taluka panchayats became small matters by comparison, and fell into desuetude.

Provincial elections in 1937, which were won by the Congress party after an intensive political campaign, helped to stimulate subsequent political action by tenants against the Thakurs of Madhopur. Although the electorate was closely limited by criteria of property and education, a few low-caste people were entitled to vote. One of these was a Noniya, who not only voted but also actively supported the Congress candidate. The Noniya was an exceptional individual. As a boy, he had struggled to get himself an education through the eighth grade. He put his education to use by learning and studying

the land laws. He quickly realized that, even before the formation of a Congress ministry, the permanent tenants had possessed guaranteed rights which the Thakurs were ignoring. The tenants were so cowed and were kept in such a state of ignorance by the Thakurs that the more powerful and clever Thakurs could successfully evict even tenants who had legal right to permanency. The Noniya first defended his own lands against seizure by the Thakurs and then began to advise the other Noniyas, as well as the Camars who lived near the Noniya hamlet, as to their rights.

Not long after the elections, in 1938 the Camars made their first large-scale attack upon the Thakurs position of power. They did so by supporting some Noniyas rather than their own Thakurs in a dispute over land. This alliance of Noniyas and Camars gave one of the first indications of the growing solidarity of the lower castes in opposition to the Thakurs. To punish them for joining the Noniyas, the Thakurs decided to prevent the rebellious Camars from sowing their winter crop. A gang of Thakurs went to the fields where the Camars were working, drove off their cattle, beat the Camars, and then went to the Camars' hamlet where they ripped down the thatched roofs of the Camars' houses.

The Camars held council with the Noniya who was their ally. He advised them to complain directly to the district magistrate in Jaunpur, while he himself wrote letters on their behalf to various officials in Lucknow, the state capital. The Camars, preparing for the difficult siege, took their cattle and all that they could carry of their belongings and went to Jaunpur. There the District Congress Committee fed and housed them. The Camars immediately hired a lawyer to prosecute the Thakurs who had beaten them.

The Thakurs of Madhopur supposed that the beaten Camars had simply run off to another village. When word reached them of the Camars' legal and political action, they were thunderstruck. A few of the more influential Thakurs went at once to Banaras, where they contacted a relative who was an employee in the courts. Through him they were able to reach the officials in Jaunpur who would deal directly with the case which the Camars were bringing against them. The Thakurs were successful in having the case delayed and then in having it taken out of the courts in Jaunpur and sent to the more pliable subdistrict officer's court in Kerakat. The Thakurs next bribed the police subinspector of Kerakat to delay his report to that court for several months. Meanwhile, the court ordered that no one must cultivate the land in dispute in order to prevent further trouble. During all this time the Camars had to pay a lawyer, court fees, and other expenses, while they were deprived of income from their cultivation. After more than six months of postponements, the Camars agreed to a compromise with Thakurs. They dropped their case against the

Thakurs, took back their lands, and obtained a written guarantee from the Thakurs that the Thakurs could not beat them.

The Thakurs had nevertheless caused the Camars great loss by attrition.

The "Quit India" movement in 1942 and the independence agitation of 1946-47 reached the village of Madhopur and even touched the Camars. These political actions were but distractions, however, from the Camars' own drive for power.

The next principal episode in the Camars' struggle and their second major defeat came about after the passing of the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act, of 1947. Under this Act, which replaced the previous official, appointed panchayat, a village council (gaon sabha) and a rural court (panchayati adalat) were to be elected by universal adult suffrage. The village council, with thirty-six members, was to take over a large number of local governmental power and responsibilities regarding land, sanitation, roadways, rationing, etc. The rural court was to try all minor cases from Madhopur and several nearby villages.

Elections for these new panchayats in 1948 provided the occasion for the first successful organization of all the lower castes of Madhopur against the Thakurs. The party of the lower castes was called the "Tenant (Praja) Party." Its leadership was provided by an Ahir, a Brahman who had been a political thug, a Kandu who had lived many years in Bombay, a Teli who prided himself on his part in the independence movement, and the Noniya who had stimulated previous legal action against the Thakurs. Several of the lower castes were brought into the Tenant party by their own caste headmen. Secret meetings were then held in the Camar hamlets. When protection was promised them against possible reprisals by the Thakurs, the Camars joined the party wholeheartedly. Some Thakurs even associated themselves with the Tenant party from the beginning, partly through friendship with its Brahman leader and partly through a desire to strike back at old enemies within their own caste.

As the time for the panchayat elections drew near, the Thakurs who had been the traditional leaders of the village saw that the Tenant party controlled the bulk of the electorate. The influential Thakur who had been the chairman of the old appointed panchayat declined to stand at all in the election lest he be defeated. Other influential Thakurs likewise withdrew from candidacy. In a final gesture of disassociation, the majority of the Thakurs refused even to vote against the Tenant majority.

The lower castes' Tenant party thus succeeded in election both a village council and rural court made up wholly of its own candidates

or sympathizers. Camars were elected to both bodies. The traditional village leadership of the Thakurs had been completely routed from formal control of Madhopur. What was more, the Tenant party's strength and its connections with the district Congress party at first prevented the Thakurs from moving directly against it.

After its initial success in winning the panchayat elections, however, the Tenant party rapidly declined in power and organization. The village council whose offices had been won proved unwieldy. Ordinances which the council passed to promote cleaning of the village paths, proper drainage, and removal of manure piles could not be made effective because of the opposition of the traditional leaders who were Thakurs and of persons of other high castes. An attempt by Camars to force compliance by court action proved too expensive. The village council found itself unable even to collect its own tax. Its meetings, scheduled to be held monthly, became less and less frequent. The Tenant party was disrupted through the bribing of some of its leaders, and through lawsuits brought against its members individually by certain Thakurs. The low castes, and particularly the Camars, lacked the economic base for a long-term fight against the Thakurs, on whom they were dependent for a livelihood. The final act in the dissolution of the Tenant party was the murder of one of its leaders by a Thakur.

Thus, although the Camars found that with their allies they could elect a village government and for a short time could even coerce the upper castes, they found also that they could not sustain themselves in a position of effective dominance. Today, political solidarity among the lower castes of Madhopur has vanished, and there is much discouragement.

C. EFFORTS TO RAISE SOCIAL STATUS

For the last thirty years the Camars of Madhopur have struggled consciously to raise their status on another, related front—that of the caste hierarchy—but with scarcely greater outward success than they achieved on the political front.

At least two generations ago *Jaisvara*, Camars in the vicinity of Madhopur began to outlaw the eating of beef and the carting of manure in what proved a futile attempt to gain greater respect for the caste. Previously Camars had been thought degraded because of their eating of carrion beef; they often had been accused of poisoning cattle in order to obtain the meat. Somewhat more than thirty years ago, beef eating was banned by the Camars. Although some Thakurs suspect that a few Camar women still eat beef, Camars maintain that beef-eaters would be outcasted immediately. Thirty years ago, in opposition to their own Thakurs, some Camars of Madhopur declared

also that they would no longer carry manure to the Thakurs' fields. They were compelled to leave the village to escape the Thakurs' wrath. When ultimately these Camars were permitted to return to the village and were excused from the manure work which they had perceived as degrading, Camar women in general took a further step; they refused any longer to make dung cakes for the Thakurs' households. Ultimately, they, too, secured a grudging acquiescence from the Thakurs. As for inspiring greater respect from the higher castes, such changes of caste behaviour receive at best passive recognition, certainly not approval. The gain to the Camars from these changes has been chiefly a gain in the vital dimension of self-respect.

Camars are not alone in trying to elevate their caste status. Fifteen years ago representatives of most of the *Bhars* of Kerakat Tahsil met to plan ways to raise their status. Several educated Bhars who were government officials addressed the meeting and told them that they were lowly and despised because they raised pigs. The Bhars gave up pig-raising, yet it is difficult to say that they have improved their status in the eyes of other castes. They are still regarded as "untouchable," although they are held in better regard than are the *Khatiks* and *Pasis* of the area, who still herd swine.

Other castes have made more extreme efforts to raise their status. Fifteen years ago the Noniyas of Madhopur went so far as to put on the sacred thread and call themselves by their long-claimed title of "*Cauhan Rajput*." Their action was met with violence by the Lords of the village, who beat the Noniyas, broke their threads, and threatened further violence if the act was repeated. Five years ago the Noniyas again put on their sacred threads, this time without overt reaction on the part of the Lords. Now the Ahirs and the Lohars of Madhopur also wear the thread of the twice-born, the Ahirs calling themselves "Yadav Rajputs" and the Lohars claiming to be "Visvakarma Brahmins." Camars in nearby villages of Jaunpur District and also in Azamgarh District have started wearing sacred threads, calling themselves "Harijan Thakurs," but so far the Camars of Madhopur have not joined them.

Such attempts by Camars to raise their caste status are not individual in character or effect, nor are they necessarily legislated by large, formal gatherings. Rather, a leader or group of leaders in the caste in one village may feel that some traditional behaviour should be changed, and the change is talked over in the village. Relatives and others who are visiting hear about the proposed change and carry the news to their home villages. If a local group of Camars decides to initiate the change, it decrees that any Camar who fails to conform to the new pattern will be outcasted. Active propagandizing follows

from the initiating village or villages. Ultimately, the initiating Camars determine that they will no longer give daughters to or accept daughters-in-law from Camars who do not conform to the change.

While the Camars are becoming stricter about their habits of diet, dress, and occupation, the higher castes are becoming less strict. Camars have become very sensitive about such matters as accepting food from castes whom they consider to be their inferiors, while at the same time some of the Thakurs are relaxing their conformity to commensal prohibitions. Younger Camars are less prone to give outward signs of respect to Thakurs, and the younger Thakurs seem to expect such signs less.

Quite apart from changes in traditional symbols of caste status, modern secular education is playing a central role in Camars' efforts to improve their position. Camars constantly verbalize a desire for more education, and many attribute their low position to a lack of education. But those two Camars who have achieved the most education—the two Camar school teachers—have not been accorded the full degree of respect which is granted to teachers of higher caste. Teachers of higher caste are called "Master" (*Master*), while these Camar teachers are merely called "Writer" (*Munsi*). Teachers of higher caste are given a string cot or chair to sit on when they visit a Thakur's house, while these Camar teachers are given instead a stool or an overturned basket only—a better seat, however, than the floor, which is the only place for an uneducated Camar. One of these schoolteachers is among the leaders who are most actively attempting to make Camar behaviour accord more with the traditional behaviour of the higher castes. Education is an individual achievement, but even educated Camars cannot escape an awareness that mobility for them, too, must be a group phenomenon.

D. RELIGIOUS CHANGES

Consistent with efforts to raise their caste status and to gain power, the Camars of Madhopur have in recent years also made conscious efforts to suppress their distinctive traditional religion, to Sanskritize their rituals still further, and to emulate the specific religious forms of the higher castes. Although they continue to propitiate the goddess *Bhagauti* jointly in ceremonies of the whole hamlet, and although they continue to worship the other village deities as do members of higher castes, yet they have made many changes in the rest of their religious practice. Camar schoolteachers, leading families, and especially members of the *Siva Narayan* sect, rather than the traditional Camar panchayat, have been the principal agents of these changes. At the same time that the Camars are becoming more concerned with the forms of their religion, however, many persons of

the upper castes, most notably the Thakurs, are being drawn into a more secular culture.

Domestic ceremonies of the Camars have been modelled increasingly upon domestic ceremonies of the Thakurs and Brahmans, especially under the influence of leaders and devotees of the Siva Narayan sect. The sacrifice of a pig which formerly began the Camar wedding ceremony has now been given up and replaced by the cutting of a nutmeg. The practice of giving dowry has been introduced, although the boy's father still gives a token payment to the girl's father : here the transition between bride price and dowry can be seen in progress. Camar weddings have now been lengthened from one day to three days, so as to resemble Brahman weddings. A brahman priest now conducts every ceremony of the wedding except the final rites. While Thakurs now marry at higher ages, Camars are marrying at lower ages : Camars of Madhopur now marry at from five to seven years of age, whereas they had previously married at from twelve to sixteen years of age. Horoscopes are now cast by Brahmans for Camar babies at the ceremony of naming, and death rituals have been altered in several ways so as to conform more closely with the practices of the higher castes. Adherence to the cult of *Pancon Pir* has been eliminated. A new emphasis on pilgrimages has helped to Sanskritize Camar religion even more fully. If the older cult of Siva Narayan may be said to have paralleled Sanskritic religion, recent changes have moved Camar religion directly toward the main stream of the great tradition of orthodox Hinduism.

Parts of the religious ideology of the Siva Narayan sect recently have been fused with the social and political aspirations of the Camars in annual celebrations of the birthday of the Camar saint, Raidas, in the month of *Magh* (January-February). Educated Camars have played an important part in the revival and transformation of these birthday celebrations. In 1953 the procession and meeting were organized by a Camar member of the Legislative Assembly, by several of the Camar schoolteachers in the area of Madhopur, and by Camar students from Ganesh Rai Intermediate College and from the Banaras Hindu University. Camars from all of Dobhi Taluka attended the celebration. The speakers, who included a Thakur schoolteacher, spoke of Raidas as a saint and pointed out the Camars' contribution to the culture and religion of India. Several of the speakers used Raidas as an example of a Camar who, through leading a "good life," gained the respect of the rest of the community. Other speakers used the opportunity to preach political action to the Camars. Saints and devotees such as Raidas are important to the Camars because they reaffirm the Camars' belief that members of their caste at one time were the equals or in some senses the superiors of the Brahmans and other high castes. The stories reaffirm the belief that it is not a person's caste status but his devotion that counts.

V. SUMMARY

The Camars of Madhopur, like many other peoples of the Indian subcontinent, are in the midst of processes of change. These processes of change are complex and even contradictory. While the Camars are organizing and fighting for social, political, and economic equality with the higher castes, they are also trying to borrow and to revive for themselves elements of a culture that the higher castes are shedding. As the higher castes of Madhopur become secularized and are increasingly drawn into an urban economy and culture, the Camars seem to be trying not only to benefit by the loosening of some old restrictions but also to buttress their own position by adapting these old restrictions to new uses.

IV

OLD ORDER CHANGETH*

G. MORRIS CARSTAIRS

A VILLAGE IN RAJASTHAN

Normally, in the new order of things, the chief authority in the village is the democratically elected village panchayat, and the village's first citizen is the Sirpanch. In fact, however, this body has not yet gained the citizen's respect and confidence. Perhaps one reason is that the Hindu villager's genius is antipathic to ways of ordering things which are too cut and dried, precise, impersonal. Significantly, in the old days a panchayat never consisted of five, or seven or any defined number of men: nor was there a recognised spokesman. Each dispute was a new crisis within a small sub-section of the community, to be decided on its merit by those senior members who were most intimately concerned—and not by rigid law or precedent.

Similarly, one has the feeling that the village as a whole, in scores of unrelated informal *panchayatis*, is beginning to formulate its group attitude towards the changing order; and in the process, it is noticeable that one or two forceful characters emerge as the men that matter in the village. All of them are above the average in wealth, but it is not only that—four of the richest men in the village (a Punjabi, a *darzi*, a Sheikh and a Bania: all moneylenders) refrain altogether from taking part in public affairs.

During this period of flux, also, a major feud has developed between two factions of banias, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for the ordinary citizen to prevent his being drawn into one side or the other. The dispute began over a struggle as to which faction should get control of the sale of rationed cloth: It has gone on to quarrels, fights, law-suits, "rigging" of the village panchayat elections—and it seems to gather momentum as it goes.

Congress teaching, and social reforms in general, have never received a very warm reception in this conservative community. At present the chief spokesmen for the new order are young men, who scandalise their elders by violating the old caste restrictions, and by daring to defend the reforms of the Hindu Code Bill. Their speeches

*Reproduced from "India's Villages" a collection of articles originally published in the Economic Weekly of Bombay, pp. 37-38.

and propaganda would be better received by the under-privileged castes, were it not that their own record of behaviour has been conspicuously discreditable. Thus Fatehpura, like so many villages in Rajasthan, seems to lag behind the rest of the country in recognising the social and economic changes which are spreading all over India. Yet there is one factor which is already operating to change this backwardness. During the last four years, more than ever before, many of the young men of the village have had to go abroad to seek work. When they come back, they are outspokenly critical of many of the old ways. They repudiate the last vestiges of kowtowing to the feudal overlords : they teach their caste-fellows city ways of asserting themselves against the rich—already the cobblers have gone on strike to assert their demand for a fair price for their work.

In the present lacuna left by the disappearance of the old regime, a few strong self-interested men are asserting their personal authority : but so far, it is a tentative assertion—they are like wrestlers circling round each other warily in the ring—and all the while the disinherited jagirdars look on, grudging the loss of their former pre-eminence.

As I have tried to indicate, in a complex, reciprocally, interacting community like this big village, the emergence of leaders, of social sanctions and of new social forms of expression of opinion cannot be accomplished by act of parliament, however well thought out. It is an organic process, the product of a multitude of thrusts and stresses. In Fatehpura, as in villages all over Rajasthan, the process is going on apace.

V

A STUDY IN RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL CHANGE*

G. MORRIS CARSTAIRS

In the proud history of Mewar (the "Vir-Bhumi" or Hindustan) the Bhil tribesmen have played an important part.

Villages in this Bhil country are quite unlike those of the plains. Bhil houses are built at some distance from each other. Sometimes a man's married sons will build their homes close to their father's but most houses are alone, built strategically on the top of a small hill, or on a jungle slope so as to command a view over the paths of approach. To a stranger these houses seem to be scattered at random all over the countryside; but stop and speak to any Bhil and he will be able to say to which village his house belongs, and who is his *Mukhi* or headman.

This post of Mukhi is hereditary with the provision that the most capable and not necessarily the eldest, son of the previous headman is accepted by the villagers as his successor. The Mukhi represents the village in all dealings with other villages or with the Ruler's representatives. His authority is unchallenged—provided that it is sensibly exercised; because all the time there is an accompaniment of discussion of each village event among the senior heads of houses and only if the Mukhi's decisions are endorsed with their approval does he command his villagers' obedience. The Bhils here are organized in exogamous patrilineal lineages, akin to the *gotra* of caste Hindus.

As may be inferred from the above, there is no serious congestion in this territory. Everyone raises makai (maize) in the rainy season—as much as he can tend—and still a good deal of available land in the smaller valleys is left to run wild. In winter, the hill streams usually do not dry up and their waters are led by ingeniously constructed series of earth and wooden channels, called *saran*, to irrigate fields of wheat and gram. In consequence, most of the fields lie idle until the next rains.

The jungle provides good grazing all the year round and every family has a modicum of cattle and goats, whose milk they turn to

*Reproduced from the article "Bhil Villages of Western Udaipur" in "India's Villages"—a collection of articles originally published in the Economic Weekly of Bombay, pp. 61—70.

ghee and sell at the nearest trader's shop. This, and the sale of bee's wax found in the jungle, and leaves for the wrapping of bidis, provides them with a few annas a day just enough to buy the essentials of life—salt, pepper, grain and tobacco. Their diet rarely includes any vegetables; occasionally it is relieved with small game, which they hunt with bows and arrows. Their idea of luxury is a feed of gur and a drink of daru, the spirit locally distilled from mohva flowers.

To a newcomer, a striking feature about these northern Bhils is that they all go about armed, carrying bows and arrows, or muskets or swords and invariably a sharp dagger in a sheath at their waists. When they see a stranger walking in their hills, they stand with weapons at the ready, looking to see who he is; and this wariness is not misplaced, because robbery and violence are of common occurrence.

In an idle and hungry time, like the present year of drought, robbery is especially life. Thieves who get away with a valuable prize, such as a cow or a bullock, will try to drive it to a distant part of Bhomat, or southwards into Gujrat, and there sell it; but if the chase is too hot, they hide, and slaughter the cattle, and have a feast. They do not share a Hindu's abhorrence of eating beef.

If they rob each other, they are still more prone to rob strangers passing through their countryside. Wayfarers are set upon, beaten and robbed of all they have, down to the last shred of their clothing.

Besides pre-occupation with theft, the Bhils devote a good deal of time and energy to the pursuit of love and to the feuds that break out whenever a husband discovers that he has been cuckolded. In a group of five villages it was found that 15 per cent of all marriages were cases in which the bride had been abducted, usually with her own connivance. Such an abduction causes a state of hostility to break out between the villages concerned, especially if there is an aggrieved husband in the case.

Politics in the modern sense reached this Bhil country just after the first World War when a Congress pioneer, called Moti Lal Tejawat, began to tour the hill tracts, preaching the need for reform. In part, his teaching was like that of the bhagats who appear from time to time among the Bhils, and command a sporadic allegiance. Like them, he said: "Stop eating meat, stop drinking daru." But he went on to say: "Stop robbing Banias"—he came himself from a Bania family, with shops in certain Bhomat villages.

The reason for his popularity lay not in his familiar prohibitions but in a new teaching which he propounded: "This land is yours, the Bhils'. You should be the masters here yourselves, and not obey the tyrant Rajahs, nor pay taxes to the Government."

In the daily life of these Bhils, magic and witchcraft plays a very important part while religion occupies a minor role. It is true that they sometimes invoke Bhagwan, whom they regard as being above all other gods, but seldom intervening in the lives of ordinary mortals; and they have a smattering of knowledge of some of the Hindu deities. Indeed, every large village has its separate devra, a small roofless stone hut, in which are placed a row of images of Dharam Raj, Kala-Nag, Bhairav and one or other Mataji. These images are of baked clay, and brightly painted. They are made in the village of Molera, near Nathdwara, and it costs the Bhils a six-day journey on foot to bring them. They refer to them as "those Mewar gods." Once brought, however, these handsome images are neglected, left out in all weathers, so that in most devras they lie colourless and badly worn. On one night in the year, there is a jagaran at this shrine, but for the rest of the year, no one bothers to visit it. Whereas in Mewar, the bhopa, or priest of the shrine, is a very important person, here, among the Bhils he is regarded as a figure of fun, and is little respected. They turn instead to the devalo, or village magician, to diagnose all cases of sickness, and to effect his magical remedies. If the devalo is esteemed highly, it is partly because of the universal belief in witchcraft. Not only is every adult woman believed to practise this: in addition, every head of a household keeps a Sikotri, that is, a demon-goddess with her attendant executive agent, the Vir. If appealed to with appropriate mantars, this Sikotri will send her Vir to strike down your enemy and when this happens, only the skill of a very clever devalo can save his life. So prevalent is this magic, that in making a betrothal, the negotiators commonly ask: "Is there a Protector in the house?" meaning, does the household possess a Sikotri, and only if the answer is "Yes," do they proceed.

Some households, instead of Sikotri, keep a shrine sacred to Kamri-path, a fierce and jealous male god, who demands a lot of homage in the form of singing and dancing to strange, exciting traditional Bhil tunes: in turn, he frequently enters into and "possesses" the worshippers as a sign of his goodwill—and he is heartily feared by all who do not adhere to this sect.

Put briefly, then, the Bhils show a dim awareness of some aspects of Hindu worship, but their own old gods and demons still command much greater fear and respect.

So long as a feud exists and in every village there are always two or three "ubo," i.e., outstanding—the parties to it "break off diplomatic relations," that is, they will not sit nor eat nor smoke together and, again like sovereign powers, they "reserve the right to take appropriate action" with bow and arrow or sword or muzzle-loader. It is this continuing threat of the recourse to violence which stimulates the Mukhis and the neighbours of the families concerned,

to work for a settlement: and until this has been reached, in the presence of a panchayat of responsible caste fellows, and the disputants have eaten opium together to symbolise the end of their enmity, the dispute will not be over—no matter what the official decision has been.

This conservation of customs is one aspect of a more general process which has kept the Bhils apart from all the other communities in Mewar. On the debit side, it has caused them to remain poor, unlettered and unskilled, although living on the richest soil in the country; to its credit must be put the robust traditions of song and dance, of independence and of exuberant *joie-de-vivre*, of which one would not wish them ever to be deprived.

VI

KOTAS OF A NILGIRI VILLAGE*

DAVID G. MANDELBAUM

Formerly a tribal people, the kota of the Nilgiri Hills are now subject to the same forces which affect villagers in South India generally. The seven Kota villages are interspersed among those of the ancient inhabitants of the Nilgiris.

Kota economy was aboriginally geared to a caste-like division of labour with three other tribes. In return for the idea, tools, wooden utensils, pots, and music which they provided, the Kota received traditionally fixed contributions. From the Toda, the Kota obtained buffalo carcasses and some dairy products; from the Kurumba they procured magical protection and some forest produce; and from the most numerous people, the agricultural Badaga, they received grain.

For over a century past, English officials, European missionaries, and migrants—both Hindu and Muslim—from the neighbouring plains have come into the Nilgiri plateau. For many years the advent of these new-comers had remarkably little effect on the relations among the Nilgiri tribes. Then, in the last twenty-five years, changes have come with a rush.

Most Badagas, who now buy tools and utensils in the bazaars of the Nilgiri towns, also stopped using Kota music at ceremonies. With the income from the Badagas thus curtailed the Kotas had to increase their agricultural efforts. Like the other cultivators of the Nilgiri area, they have concentrated on the growing of a cash crop, potatoes. The Kota use potatoes occasionally in curries, but do not consider potatoes to be a real food. Hence, they must buy foodgrains with the cash derived from the potato crop.

Once a Kota begins to raise potatoes on his land, he cannot readily go back to subsistence cultivation. Potato cultivation is done with the spading fork rather than with the traditional plough. Partly

*Reproduced from the article "Technology, Credit and Culture in a Nilgiri Village from "India's Villages"—a collection of articles originally published in the *Economic Weekly of Bombay*, pp. 93-95.

because draught animals are no longer necessary for agricultural technology and partly because the expansion of acreage under cultivation has reduced the pasture land available, the number of cattle has declined. This has sharply curtailed the supply of organic fertilizers which are necessary for a good crop yield of grain. Moreover potato cultivation demands the use of artificial fertilizers and these may be obtained only for cash which is obtainable by the Kota only through potato cultivation.

Thus the Kota villager must buy commercial fertilizers in order to raise a crop of any kind. He can get the cash or the credit with which to buy fertilizers only for growing potatoes.

Credit, for most Kota cultivators, is essential for their economic operations. Some Kota have utilised the Government sponsored co-operative credit association. But as not uncommonly happens elsewhere in India, the Kota villager has generally found the bureaucratic organization of these credit co-operatives too rigid and has not used this service regularly despite the lower rates of interest charged.

Not only is the Kota villager dependent on the supply and price of fertilizer but he is also dependent on the supply and price of foodgrains in the local ration shop. The food rationing system operates even in the smallest Kota hamlet. The villager must take the kind of grain allotted to his ration shop and, in the past few years of mounting inflation, his money has brought less food than before.

The rush of recent change has also weakened the internal cohesion of the village. Formerly a villager who transgressed the traditional patterns would be subjected by the other villagers to the sanction of non-co-operation. This sanction was a serious penalty in intra-tribal as well as inter-tribal affairs because an individual could not make a living alone even if he were able to withstand the psychological hardship of social isolation. Most economic operations required the work of a team of villagers and a man who could not work as part of a team had little chance of earning a livelihood. Now, however, a man can stand alone economically because there are many lowlanders available to be hired as labourers. The number of those in the Kota village of Kolmel who have broken with some of the old traditions and have ignored the displeasure of the conservative villagers has grown until the village is divided into two factions. The members of one faction do not inter-dine or co-operate or worship with the members of the other faction. The old unity of the village as against other groups is no longer manifest.

In place of the old economic dependence on the supply of Badaga grain, the Kota villager is now dependent on the supply of fertilizer available from the factory, on the purchasing power of his money, on the vagaries of supply in the ration shop. The great difference is not in the fact of economic dependence but in the fact that formerly the Kota had some control over the peoples on whom they were dependent. They have no control over the peoples and forces on whom they are presently dependent. This frustration has made for greater hostilities between Kota and Badaga as well as between conservative and reform factions within the village. Some hostility is also directed toward the Government. Similar situations prevail widely in Indian villages.

VII

FUNCTIONING OF PANCHAYATI ADALAT IN A U.P. VILLAGE*

McKIM MARRIOTT

PRESENT PROBLEMS

No one will perhaps be surprised if a village whose social relations are structured in the manner of Kishan Garhi's does not rapidly develop an active village committee (gaon panchayat) or contribute to the building of an effective rural court (panchayati adalat) as prescribed in the U.P. Panchayat Raj Act. The village committee that was officially acclaimed includes a fair sampling of members from many castes. But that committee never meets. The group that actually considers public issues and uses the powers granted by authority of the new Act is none other than the old informal local Brahman council, representing one-quarter of the people and a little more than half of the tenancy rights. The ex-landlords proudly abstain from participation in this body, manoeuvring as best they can through the remnants of their followings, or experimenting with alliances among the other disinherited persons. The Brahman council acting as village committee has been unable to establish trust sufficient to permit it to collect as much as one-half of its small committee tax, or to realize more than a fraction of the fines which it has levied during a period of nearly three years. It was able with great difficulty to collect enough straw to repair the roof of the two-room village school. It has been unable to carry through any of the three projects of village improvement which it haltingly undertook on the suggestion of its government-appointed secretary. It has achieved punishment of one petty misdemeanour within the Brahman caste, and of two minor crimes by lower persons against Brahmans. In all other cases there have been dissident opinions which led the committee to appeal to non-official coercive arbitration by the police or by a neighbouring landlord, or to refer the cases to due process of law in the regular courts.

The failure of the village committee to dispose of cases of conflict in the village does not mean that conflict has been in any way lessened. Since its official inception, the village committee has formally

*Reproduced from the article "Social Structure and Change in a U.P. Village" from "India's Villages"—a collection of articles originally published in the *Economic Weekly* of Bombay, pp. 106-109.

entered more than thirty cases—an average of a new case each month. Of these thirty, twenty-five have passed up to the rural court at Brij Garhi. Cases are often trivial in origin: insults, threats and suspected plotting are common instigations for the filing of a suit, although the formal charge may be theft, beating or default of payment. The initiating fees and gifts are deceptively small. One vague issue quickly deviates and diffuses into other issues as additional members of the affected kin groups and their allies join in the case as “witnesses.” Two or three officially unrelated cases are always in progress; not uncommonly all dissolve at once if crucial advantage on real issues is gained by one faction in the dispute. If the opposed faction can manage it, three new cases may be fabricated for entry on the next day. An average case runs for two months in the rural court. An average villager may spend a whole day of each month in litigation, throughout the year.

The rural court at Brij Garhi has superior jurisdiction over the village committee at Kishan Garhi, and over four other village committee areas in the region. The delegates sent by Kishan Garhi, to the rural court were elected just as were the village committees, by public show of hands confirming a panel of nominees which had been previously negotiated by the returning officer among the castes, lineages and factional groupings of the village. Almost all of the twenty-five members of the rural court are landlords. But the landlords’ own hierarchy of dominance has been much disrupted of late, and they too, like the litigant tenants of Kishan Garhi, are torn by competition and aligned in shifting factions. Unable now to arbitrate conflicts single-handedly, these rustic magistrates do battle among themselves using litigants as pawns. Such a contentious court as theirs welcomes new litigation, but has little interest in achieving real composition of the cases which come before it. Its “dismissals” often simply represent delays and diversions of process into the higher courts; its inept “decisions” often simply provide the technical bases necessary for higher appeals. Still the ex-landlords have a smattering of the law and enough valuable higher connections to guarantee their control of the rural court for some time to come. Tahsildars and Subdivisional Officers, deluged now with the new volume of litigation pouring in from the rural courts, are apt to regard their villagers as deprived or to look back longingly on the days when there was at least one strong man in each village who could be depended upon to settle petty quarrels with a firm hand. The strong men of the past are the amateur advocates of the present.

Kishan Garhi’s internal divisions are not entirely disadvantageous to governmental administration; indeed, factional splits are often temporarily useful to officials who might otherwise have to cope with united opposition against their official acts.

The three major crimes of Kishan Garhi in recent years which fell to the police for investigation were all solved by the technique of widening factional divisions at promising points, and then extracting mutually incriminating information from both of the two opposed groups. The party leaders who had to assist the revenue officials in collecting landlord abolition payments and who had to get out the vote in the elections similarly made use of competition among Kishan Garhi's factions.

Were the national economy moving smoothly towards the goal of improved sustenance and a better rural life, then the problem of concerted action in villages like Kishan Garhi might not be thought acute. But some amount of concerted action is now required by intense and inequitable competition for static productive resources and static social goods. Most programmes for technical or economic development of rural India require that there be a modicum of local co-operation that disregards primary group affiliations. Officials at all levels recognize the fragmentation of village social structure as a chief obstacle in the way of any programme.

The low state of co-operation that presently prevails among the kin groups of Kishan Garhi and the structural features that determine it suggest that greater concerted action will be achieved in the future only by a more severe unsettling of basic structures than has occurred in any age of the past. The energies of the kin groups are now devoted to securing their private prestige and prosperity, to advancing and fulfilling the claims of marriage. The inequities that once articulated the castes and lineages in work and subordinated them to one another in wealth and power are seeking a level. The ritual devices that set the castes in an agreed hierarchy of ranks are now partly confounded. The kinship groupings themselves remain as so many sovereign states, loosely linked by a few work relationships, by a handful of friendships, and by the ceremonies of an ancient cycle. To ask the forty-six lineages of Kishan Garhi to continue to live by shifting alliances is to insure inaction or strife rather than co-operation. To entice them to delegate some of their loyalties for the work of the village as a whole is to lure the old social structure toward its sure destruction.

VIII

AN ORIYA HILL VILLAGE: IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CHANGE ON CASTE INSTITUTION*

F. G. BAILEY

The topic selected for study is not merely of local interest but manifests itself in other regions of India and, to a greater or lesser extent, in all parts of the world. The general problem is the impact of mercantilism on an agricultural near-to-subsistence economy: what happens when the village is made part of the larger economy of the country and ultimately of the world? How is the village initiated into this larger system? What conflicts arise and how is the internal structure of the village modified by them?

The problem is analysed with reference to the caste system of a village in the hills of Orissa. The region is peculiarly suited for this purpose since it is geographically and historically demarcated.

What does the history of this village tell us about the effect of economic change on caste as an institution?

In the original village the relationship between castes was not simply one of ritual practice: the division of wealth and political power followed the same lines as caste division. Except for the single family of Brahmins, the Warriors were at the head of the caste ritual hierarchy: they were the wealthy class in the village: and they had the political power. Caste, in short, functioned as a political system.

Then the ultimate seat of political power moved outside the village. At the same time redistribution of wealth upset the political structure inside the village. Divisions of wealth no longer followed the same lines as caste division. A readjustment was inevitable, for, to put it simply, rich men do not like being snubbed.

One caste of newly-rich reacted in the classical manner and improved their status within the existing caste hierarchy. In other words, there was an internal reshuffle of positions, but the caste system con-

*Reproduced from the article "An Oriya Hill Village II" from "India's Villages"—a collection of articles originally published in the *Economic Weekly of Bombay*, p. 118.

tinued to order political relations between the groups concerned and to reflect their economic status.

But in the other two examples caste does not perform this function. The political relationship of the Warriors to the Ganjam Distillers does not depend on their positions in a caste hierarchy. It is worked out in the Government courts. The political relationship of the Warriors and the Boad Outcastes is going the same way. Under pressure of economic change the political functions of caste are being taken over, as one might expect, by the ultimate political authority, the Government of India.

IX

CHANGE IN THE LEADERSHIP OF A MYSORE VILLAGE*

ALAN R. BEALS

Hattarahalli is a village of average size (population 620) about fifteen miles from a large city in Southern India. For seventy years or more, it has been affected by urban influences reaching out from the city. Schools, courts of law, cinemas, hotels, military camps, railroads, buses, and motor lorries have brought about changes in almost every aspect of life. To the people of Hattarahalli, the most important of these changes are in the caste and character of those who control the social and economic life of the village.

In 1890, Hattarahalli was a small village of about three hundred persons. It was dominated by five families whose rule was based on principles of gerontocracy, inherited privilege, and economy power. In 1952, while age, heredity, and wealth continued to be important in determining a man's social position, the dominant class in the village was a middle class group of educated small businessmen, farmers, teachers and factory workers. This group, which had been educated in schools where English and Gandhian ideals of democracy and social equality were taught, placed little faith in traditional ideals of caste and social stratification. Their desire was to direct the course of village development in accordance with their new urban ideals. Perfect democracy had not "arrived" at Hattarahalli in 1952, nor was the caste system dead; but there was a movement away from traditional authoritarianism and social hierarchy, a movement opposed by those individuals who stood to profit from a return to the old way of doing things.

In a year of drought and unrest, such as 1952, the struggle between conservative and progressive elements for the control of village affairs became increasingly violent. The Patel of the village, a "headman" chosen by Government on the basis of heredity, attempted to assert the superiority of this caste and to pronounce himself the supreme authority in the village. The reaction of the educated middle class group to this attack and the manner in which they defended their modern ideals is a significant illustration of the extent to which

*Reproduced from the article "Change in the Leadership of a Mysore Village" from "India's Villages"—a collection of articles originally published in the *Economic Weekly of Bombay*, pp. 132-143.

progressive urban ideals, such as those expounded by Gandhi and Nehru, are capable of penetrating into the life of an Indian village.

Before describing the events which took place in Hattarahalli in 1952, it will be useful to examine the caste system of Hattarahalli and to consider its influence upon social inter-action within the village. The principal caste groupings are Lingayat, Panchala, Kuruba, Togata, Ganiga, Moslem, and Madiga. Speaking in terms of social and economic rank, the major division in the village social organization is between the Madiga and all other castes. The Madiga are beef eaters and leather workers who are not allowed to enter the village temple or the houses of those belonging to other castes. For the most part, they are agricultural labourers owning little or no land. One or two families are exceptional in that they possess considerable land and other property.

The relationship between the various castes in Hattarahalli appears to be determined by the economic position of a particular caste at a particular time. There appears to be no complex web of hereditary obligation between families and castes, nor any strict hierarchy of castes. Washermen, Brahmin, or Jangama priests, blacksmiths, and barbers are generally chosen on the basis of skill and cost. Even in cases where ceremonial obligations are supposed to be observed in connection with particular ceremonies, the absence of particular individuals or even of members of a particular caste does not prevent the performance of the ceremony. In 1952, when the Jangamas failed to attend a particular ceremony, their priestly duties were performed by an ordinary Lingayat. During the same ceremony, when the madiga drummers were absent, two Lingayats picked up the drums and the ceremony continued. Although many individuals still maintain the custom of distributing grains or *mere* to the Patel, Shambog, blacksmith, barber, washerman, village menial and other functionaries at harvest time, many of these individuals are now paid in cash at the time the service is performed.

THE ORIGIN OF A MIDDLE CLASS

The combined effect of the famine and of a newly-introduced, British-style, system of administration was to upset this traditional village organization. The five leading families were not able to retain all of the land in the village; much of it was confiscated as they failed to pay the land taxes. Later, the same land was given to the immigrants. This constituted the first step towards the establishment of a middle class in the village. In fact, it can be said that the establishment of the small farmer in Hattarahalli was largely due to an administrative blunder which resulted in excessive taxation followed by confiscation and subsequent re-distribution of the village lands.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the hold of the five wealthy families in the village remained strong. Most of the immigrant families were in debt to these wealthy families and gave them a certain amount of free labour and a share of their agricultural produce. Nevertheless, having lost control of the land, these wealthy families suffered a gradual economic decline. During and after World War I, the small farmers gradually cleared away their debts and established themselves as a middle class element in the village. That is, they were neither labourers nor non-farming landowners.

GROWTH OF EDUCATION

Between the first and the second World Wars, the gradual development of the small farmer class in the village was paralleled by the growth of a system of public education in the rural area. Hattarahalli got a primary school in 1910 and a middle school was established in a neighbouring village in the 1920's. The first batch of students of this middle school took their public examinations in 1924 and most of them were employed as school teachers. By 1930, the production of potential school teachers exceeded the demand and a group of between thirty and forty unemployed educated youths developed in the village. This group, which was unsatisfied with such employment as was available in the village and unable to obtain employment consistent with their new status as the "educated class," demonstrated their dissatisfaction by forming something very similar to the juvenile delinquent "gang" familiar in western countries. They fought with similar gangs from nearby villages, pilfered gardens and woodpiles and generally made themselves disagreeable to the villagers.

POPULATION PRESSURE

Parallel to the development of education in the village was a rapid increase in population and a consequent fragmentation of land holding. In the 1930's although landowning small farmers were becoming increasingly numerous in the village, it was becoming more and more difficult for them to grow sufficient food for their families. Middle class farmers were faced with the prospect of emigrating or becoming labourers upon the lands of large landowners, and their educated children were faced with unemployment.

WAR BROUGHT EMPLOYMENT

The coming of World War II and the establishment of a large military camp in the vicinity of the village checked this tendency toward impoverishment. The educated men in the village were able to find profitable employment in the military camp and the small farmer learned to produce "English vegetables" (tomatoes, cabbages, carrots and beets) which he sold at high prices. When the war was

over, many of the educated people in the village found jobs as school teachers and factory labourers. The small farmers had accumulated a store of cash and were looking forward to the time when their high school educated sons would find employment in newly-constructed factories and contribute portions of their salaries to the family budget.

CHALLENGE TO VILLAGE LEADERSHIP

In 1952, the village population included ten Government employees, thirty school teachers, fifteen factory workers, and more than thirty educated small farmers. Most of the moneylenders had vanished from the scene and loans were generally obtained from neighbours who were only slightly better off economically than the borrowers. On the other hand, economic conditions were becoming increasingly worse. There was no rain, the ragi (millet) crop gave about one quarter the usual yield and many small farmers were being forced into debt. Once again, as in the 1930's, the survival of the middle class element in the village became open to question. It was at this time, when the fortunes of the middle class in the village were at their lowest ebb, that the village Patel decided to re-establish his caste as the highest in the village and to establish himself as the ruler of the village. Although the Patel was an educated man and had, at one time, formed a part of the educated group in the village, he was completely under the influence of his mother. His mother was a powerful old woman who believed that her caste was superior to all others. She has driven two of her son's wives out of the house and, despite her age, she controls every action of her son.

FIRE-WALKING CEREMONY

The Patel's first move in proclaiming the superiority of his caste was to hold a fire-walking ceremony such as had not been held in the village in sixty years. Elaborate preparations were made including cutting a sandalwood tree belonging to the village. The Patel justified this action by saying that the ceremony would benefit the whole village. At the same time, the Patel refused to admit non-Lingayats to the ceremony. The Lingayat Guru who came to conduct the ceremony objected to this because the admission of the people from other castes would have been of economic value to him. The Patel, who was paying most of the cost of the ceremony, refused to permit this. When others protested against the cutting of a public tree for a private ceremony, the Patel replied that he was the ruler of the village and that even the Government could not interfere in the village without his consent.

Although the non-Lingayat residents of the village were infuriated by the Patel's actions and talk, they contented themselves with holding a separate ceremony of their own and led a procession of the village

deity, Gopalswamy, past the fire-walking ceremony shouting derisively. Because there was heavy rain on the night of the fire-walking ceremony, most of the farmers were engaged in agricultural labour for the following week and had little time to worry about the Patel's actions. During the next forty days, however, there was no rain in the village. Standing crops withered and agricultural work came to a standstill. Those who had stocks of grains and landed property were afraid of thieves and those who lacked these resources were faced with the prospect of starvation. As the *ragi* leaves slowly curled and turned brown as a result of drought, tension in the village slowly increased. A number of individuals began to consider the Patel's action and to think of ways and means of punishing him.

AYUDHA PUJA

A fitting climax to the increasing tension in the village was the *Ayudha Puja* or worship of weapons. This ceremony begins with the sacrifice of a number of sheep and the smearing of their blood on the village carts. It reaches its peak with a procession of the village deity, Gopalswamy, to the outskirts of the village and the shooting of an arrow through a branch of a particular kind of tree in memory of the actions of the Pandavas when they regained their arms after their exile and prepared to make war upon the Kauravas. This ceremony, coming as it does at the beginning of the "lean months" before harvest, was once a signal for the beginning of small wars and border raids. Before the British came and "all small wars stopped altogether," as the Patel's mother regretfully remarked, the tensions and aggressions which accompanied the coming of the lean months were worked off in a series of border raids and minor skirmishes. The scars of these battles are still to be seen in the decaying mud forts which are to be found in many nearby villages. Hattarahalli itself was once surrounded by a hedge of thorns. Today, the prospect of the oncoming lean months creates the same sort of tensions which once led to warfare, but these tensions have no outlet except within the village.

DISPUTE OVER ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

The first incident in connection with the *Ayudha Puja* concerned the order in which the different castes were to make their offerings. The elders of all castes, including the Patel and his brother-in-law, met on the verandah of the village shop and decided to hold the complete *Ayudha Puja* ceremony for the first time in fourteen years. It was agreed that the Kuruba should make the first offering followed by the Madiga, Lingayat, Ganiga, and Panchala castes. This order was evidently based upon the number of individuals in each caste, but the Panchala, who are fourth in terms of population, were to make their offering on the fifth day as five is their sacred number. The day after this arrangement had been made, the Patel, and a number of

Lingayat families refused to contribute money to the ceremony. Our caste is the highest, they said, and we should make the first offering. Consequently, the rest of the village decided to hold a shorter ceremony with only a few Lingayat families participating. As a concession to the Lingayats who sided with the other castes in the village, the Kuruba did not make the first offering. It was made by the Panchala instead.

After refusing to contribute money to the Ayudha Puja, the Patel and his followers made a number of attempts to stop the ceremony. First, he attempted to prevent the Madiga drummers from appearing. As these drummers are village menials appointed by the Government and supervised by the village Patel, this was not difficult. When the drummers failed to appear, two Lingayats, who opposed the Patel, picked up the drums and the ceremony continued. Next, the Patel ordered numbers of his own caste to refuse to serve as priests at a ceremony which must be held at the village gate before taking the image of Gopalswamy outside the village. Finally, he brought the image of Basavanna (a bull, the vehicle of Shiva who appeared on earth in the form of a man and founded the Lingayat religion) and held a separate ceremony in competition with the Ayudha Puja. In conducting this ceremony, he demanded the services of the barbers, who serve as pipers at most ceremonies. The barbers refused to attend the *Basavanna Puja* unless it was held at a different hour. As a result, the Basavanna Puja and the Ayudha Puja were held at different times.

THE OBSTRUCTING TAMARIND TREE

When the image of Gopalswamy is taken outside the village, it is customary for four men to carry the image to the place of worship outside the village. On this occasion, the image was placed upon a cart and the height of the cart with the image on top of it exceeded twelve feet. The decision to place the image of Gopalswamy on a cart was undoubtedly connected with the fact that a tamarind tree belonging to one of the Patel's relatives overhung the road along which the procession was to pass.

Thus, when the procession started, it was found that the image would not pass under this tamarind tree. Those in the procession, some of whom had fortified themselves heavily with alcohol, demanded that the branch of the tree overhanging the road be cut off. The Patel and other Jangamas rushed out and said that not one leaf of the tree should be touched. Peacemakers in the procession took ropes and began to pull the branch to one side. The Patel felt that this constituted a felonious attack on his tree by a drunken and disorderly mob. He seized one of the Panchalas who was tugging on a rope and searched him for concealed weapons. Present in the assembly was a man who had formerly been a servant in the Panchala's house. See-

ing his former master assaulted, he rushed at the Patel swinging a naked sword. In the nick of time, his friends seized him and took away the sword. By this time, three or four individuals in each party seemed intoxicated with anger and a riot appeared to be inevitable. Fortunately, the branch was pulled aside, the combatants were separated and the procession continued.

In the twilight, the procession came to the top of a hill near the village and an arrow, signifying the beginning of the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, was shot through the branch of a tree. Just as this ceremony was completed, word came from the village that some Jangama and Lingayat women had armed themselves with brooms and were planning to attack the procession when it returned to the village and passed under the tamarind tree for the second time. When the procession reached the outskirts of the village, a delegation of hysterical women from the Panchala and Kuruba castes appealed to the men in the procession to return to the temple by a different route. This appeal had an effect opposite to that intended and those in the procession continued along the same route shouting derisively.

When the procession had come half-way to the tree, the man who had previously attacked the Patel with a sword suddenly lost control of himself and was carried by his friends to the accompaniment of much struggling and shouting to the verandah of a nearby house where he lost consciousness. This dramatic incident apparently broke the tension, for the Patel and his followers allowed the procession to pass under the tree with no remonstrance other than a heavy volley of shouted insults.

THE ARM OF LAW INVOKED

The day after this procession, it is customary to carry the image of Gopalswamy through the village and for each family to make offerings. A devout elder of the Panchala caste proposed to bring the matter to a peaceful conclusion by conducting the ceremony alone with a group of children to pull the cart. On hearing of this plan, some women from the Patel's house sat under the tree with bags of *chilli* powder and threatened to throw the powder at any procession which came by. At the same time, the Patel went to the Taluk headquarters with the intention of filing a complaint against those who had conducted the procession. When he arrived, he found that the others had been there before him and had converted the Taluk officials to their point of view. The next day, a constable came, removed the offending branch, and remained in the village until all ceremonies were completed.

Although the cutting of the tamarind branch resulted in the complete humiliation of the Patel, the aroused villagers were not content to stop there. They continued to agitate against the Patel, refusing to

perform any services for members of his caste and refusing to pay taxes. Consequently, the Patel was removed from office. When he complained to the Amildar, the Amildar, shouted, "Nonsense, shut up." The Patel, who speaks no English, took this to be a terrible insult and was afraid to say any more. As a further insult to the caste feelings of the Patel, the Amildar consulted with the villagers and chose a member of the Kuruba caste as the new Patel. The reason for this choice was that the Kurubas are, numerically, the largest caste in the village.

HEREDITARY PRIVILEGE DETHRONED

The significance of the Ayudha Puja incident described above can be interpreted only if the character of the two parties involved is considered. The Patel's party consisted of members of his own caste, the Jangama. Although the Jangama caste is of average economic status in the village at present, it was once the wealthiest caste in the village. The Patel's maternal grandfather owned much of the land in the village and had sixteen tenants on his land seven serfs in his house. The Patel's party, then, represents that element in the village which wishes to re-establish a feudal type of social hierarchy based on religious tradition and hereditary privilege. It would not be stretching the truth very far to say that the Patel wishes to become the priest-king of the village.

The party opposing the Patel was a heterogeneous collection of individuals from a number of different castes. The members of this group derived their unity from certain ideals of democracy and social equality which they held in common. These ideals were derived from Government schools from experience in the nearby military camp during World War II, and from their knowledge of the urban culture of the city.

In short, the Ayudha Puja incident represents a direct conflict between conservative traditionalists and the urban oriented middle class school teachers, factory labourers, small farmers and tradesmen of Hattarahalli. The Patel's attack upon the newly-won privileges of this middle class element in the village came during a year of crop failure when many of Hattarahalli's small farmers were living on short rations and borrowing money in order to stay alive. In spite of their economic weakness, the members of the middle class managed to overcome the Patel and his party and to name one of their own number as the new leader of the village. Not only is the middle class in Hattarahalli the largest class numerically, but it also controls the machinery of village government as the Ayudha Puja incident demonstrates. Evidently, even poor economic conditions cannot destroy the power of the middle class element in Hattarahalli. The strength of the villager's reaction to the activities of the Patel and his followers indicates that the rule of rich landowners, priestly castes, and money-lenders has come to an end in Hattarahalli.

X

VILLAGE SCHOOLS—A VILLAGE IN WEST BENGAL*

JYOTIRMOYEE SARMA

VILLAGE SCHOOLS

There is a free primary school in the village. It is attended by boys and girls of this and the neighbouring villages, as there are only three primary schools in the entire Union. Although the schools are free and open to members of all castes, a look at the list of students shows that the attendance is mainly from the upper castes. The leaders of the community often request the lower caste parents to send their children to school, but it is due to the ignorance of the guardians that these children are denied schooling. The primary schools end at class four level.

There are only two high schools in the villages comprising the Union. The high school in our village ends at class nine and does not prepare students for the school final examination. The high school in the adjoining village does, however, extend up to class ten, and of the four boys in our village preparing for the school final examination, two go to the latter school, and two go to the high school at the big town of Singur, ten miles away, commuting by train.

There is no girls' school other than the primary school. Girls desiring to go to school after the completion of class four will have to commute by train either to Singur or to Srirampur which is fifteen miles away. As a result, to this day only one girl from this village has passed the school final examination.

A few of the Brahmin and Kayastha young men are attending colleges in Calcutta. Joining commercial colleges is specially favoured. The purpose of college education is mainly to prepare one for an office job. Only one young man in the village is studying for a Master's degree. He is a Brahmin of a family of noteworthy literary tradition. He had been holding a job which he gave up to go to the University. The villagers thought him queer for this, although his interest in learning earned him respect.

*Reproduced from the article "A Village in West Bengal" from "India's Villages"—a collection of articles originally published in the Economic Weekly of Bombay, pp. 175-177.

RECREATION

One library has been established in the village through the efforts of the young men and it is endowed with private contributions. It now has thirteen hundred books. Circulation of daily newspapers is completely lacking in the homes. The men commuting to Calcutta everyday bring back news of any importance. Two of the Brahmins and two Kayasthas have battery radio sets in their homes. These are especially meant to provide entertainment, but the news is also heard.

The tradition of rural dramas and folk songs on festive occasions is still retained. But the cinema also attracts attention, and both men and women will sometimes go ten to fifteen miles by train to see a cinema show.

XI

VILLAGE SCHOOLS—A VILLAGE IN U.P.*

EAMS

One of the most interesting things about this village is the very low rate of education and literacy, despite its proximity to Lucknow City which is one of the leading educational centres in India. Until recently there has been a complete lack of emphasis on education since opportunities for an educated person in the village did not exist and the amount of education obtainable was not enough to enable a person to go to an urban centre and compete with other educated men.

There was no school of any kind in the village until 1945. At that time the villagers asked the Zemindar to donate one of his buildings for a primary school which he consented to do. He kept the school in repair, but after Zemindari Abolition his interest in the school disappeared and the District Board which is presently responsible for the school has not been able to give it very much aid. There are two teachers at the school who are residents of neighbouring villages. The total enrolment in the primary school is 61, but daily attendance usually is thirty or less. Four of those enrolled in the school are girls and they are all in the first grade. About two-thirds of the school population are from the Scheduled Castes, Pasi, Dhobi, Chamar, Baksor, and most of the remainder are from the Thakur caste. The fees charged for school attendance are: first grade, annas 1/6; second and third grades, annas 2/6; and fourth and fifth grades, annas 3/6; all girls and children from the Scheduled Castes are exempted from the payment of fees.

Education of girls in the village is still not very popular because of the very low age at marriage, usually between ten and twelve years of age. It is felt that education for a girl is merely a waste of time and that they had best be doing work in the house so that they can fit into the husband's household after the marriage takes place. Another factor involved in the unpopularity of female education is that one of the Thakur boys of the village married a girl who had completed through the third grade. This girl has refused to become part of the household and will not perform her share of the household duties. The reason given for this is that she has been educated and now feels that she is too far advanced to do this kind of work.

*Reproduced from "Rural Profiles," edited by D. N. Majumdar, pp. 50-51.

It is simple to deduce from this the difficulties that a movement for female education would encounter in this village.

There are forty individuals in the village who have had some education, but not more than half that number are able to do more than sign their names. Of these forty, eight are presently attending a Secondary High School at Bakshi-Ka-Talab. Five of these eight are Thakurs, two are Ahirs and one is a Kumhar. The three highest caste groups in the village according to the caste hierarchy that prevails, Brahmin, Thakur, and Ahir, account for 63% of all those with some education, while they are only 34% of the total population. The Scheduled Castes having 50% of the total population account for only 12% of those with some education.

XII

CHANGES IN RURAL LIFE A COMPARATIVE STUDY (1915 and 1955)*

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

During the first survey, expenses of marriage among Brahmins ranged from Rs. 1,500 to 2,500 and some parents were taking money for marrying their girls. Vaishyas had to spend larger sums on marriage and some had to "buy wives," for a price ranging from Rs. 1000 to 2000. The expenses of marriage among Patidars varied from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000. In all these 3 castes, there was dearth of brides; and so, sometimes brides were "sold and purchased" at a price ranging from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,500. However, some Patidars did not take any money for marrying their girls, but on the contrary they gave a dowry of about Rs. 500 to the bridegroom. Barias had to pay about Rs. 150 to the bride's parents while marrying their boys. Among *Dheds*, bride's parents charged about Rs. 125 if the bride was young or unmarried; and about Rs. 500 if she was "big" or a widow who knew weaving. Among muslims a bride cost about Rs. 150 to Rs. 200. In case of deaths of old persons or persons of mature age, caste dinners were held on the 12th and or the 13th day which cost about Rs. 500 to Brahmins and Vaishyas; Rs. 100 to 300 to Patidars, and ordinarily less to persons of other castes.

Comparing the castes and customs during the first survey and the second survey, we note the following changes:—

1. The number of divisions among castes, sub-castes, sections and sub-sections has generally neither increased, nor decreased, barring a few small exceptions.

2. The institutions of "*Panch*" in castes continues, but its hold, influence and power has been generally waning.

3. Some sections have written conventions, regulating caste customs and expenses and the tendency for such practice is increasing.

4. Attempts have been made to reduce amounts of money that are given as gifts on auspicious or inauspicious occasions. There have been also decisions and efforts to curtail expenses on social functions,

*Reproduced from "Bhaskar," Social and Economic Survey of a Village, a Comparative Study (1915 and 1955), pp. 40-55.

and on occasions of *seemant*, death etc., feeding of caste fellows, and expenses have been generally decreasing ; but expenses on marriage have, on the contrary increased. This increase is due partly to the rise in prices of essential commodities etc. and partly to extravagance and luxury.

5. There is great laxity and freedom in the observance of restrictions in taking food prepared or touched by inferior or lower castes. But these restrictions are ordinarily observed at home and on occasions of caste dinners.

6. In case of marriage, husband and wife belong to the same caste and among higher classes, to the same section.

7. There is still dearth of brides among Brahmins, some Vaishyas and Patidars.

8. The custom of giving a send-off by parents to the daughter with her first baby, and expenses in clothes, ornaments, etc., for daughter and some of her relations on her husband's side still continues. But in modern times, some women have not to go to their father's place, for their 'first ordeal,' and in such cases, the question of observing this custom does not arise at all.

9. Boys and girls are now betrothed and married at a later age than before, and some castes have resolved to reduce expenses relating to betrothal.

10. The practice of "*Palla*," that is gift of clothes, ornaments and money by the bridegroom's parents to the bride generally continues, and the value of "*Palla*" has increased in some higher castes.

11. For the marriage of their sons, some Patidars of Bhadkad have still to pay money to bride's parents. Some have paid Rs. 1000 to Rs. 3000 to bride's parents on such accounts.

12. Some Patidars of Bhadkad have taken money from the bridegroom's side, for marrying their girls ; it is said that such receipts varied from Rs. 1000 to 3000. Some persons who take money in this way report that they take the same not as a price, but just to cover marriage expenses. On the marriage occasions, expenses regarding food, clothing, lighting, decoration, amusements, and entertainments have increased. The increase is partly due to the rise in prices.

13. Among Brahmins and Vaishyas, widows do not remarry. Marriage by widows of these castes is considered improper, immoral and irreligious. Widow marriage is not viewed similarly by some other castes, and so among them some widows do marry again ; a second marriage by a widow may be due to economic or social reason.

14. Among castes which believe in *Sharaddh*, practice of its performance continues.

15. "Death Dinners" have decreased, but they have not been still totally abolished.

16. Weeping and breast-beating by women in unison, has become less, but is still common.

17. The custom of (*purdah*) veiling her face by a woman in the presence of her husband's elders has become less rigid, but generally it does persist among women even now.

FOOD HABITS

The main differences between the food of those in good economic condition and that of those who are poor are as under:—

The well-to-do use rice and wheat more; eat more vegetables, consume more milk, ghee, sugar, oil condiments, spices, sweets and farsans etc. The poorer sections of the people use less of rice or wheat, and more of kodri, bajri and bayta, besides taking less or going without the other items mentioned above. The quality of the food in case of the former is good or fair, and poor in case of the latter.

The following are the main changes in food during the period between the first survey and the second survey.

(1) Consumption of rice, dal and wheat has increased. Number of families eating these has also increased.

(2) Consumption of vegetables and the number of persons eating them have increased. Formerly in the summer, vegetables used to come to the village from outside at the interval of 10 or 12 days; now they come almost every day or third day.

(3) Formerly 40 to 50 families among Patidars used to eat "Bhaidka" (porridge) 4 to 5 times a week. Now hardly any Patidar family eats this.

(4) Formerly some Barias used to eat barley; now nobody among them eats the same.

(5) Formerly most of the milk in the village was exported outside for making cream. Now much less is sold outside the village. So people consume milk and ghee in greater quantities than before—at least the higher caste people and the people of means do consume them decidedly more.

(6) Pickles are eaten more than before.

(7) Consumption of sugar, molasses and condiments is greater than before.

(8) Formerly hardly in any family tea was prepared daily. Now tea is being drunk in almost all families, and some people have it twice every day. This is the chief reason for more consumption of milk and sugar in the village.

(9) Formerly there was starvation among some families, for want of sufficient food due to poverty. The number of families on starvation level has greatly decreased; but some persons in the village do starve even now.

CLOTHING

Among the Hindus most of the adults wear white dhotee and white paheran or shirt which may be white or coloured. Some of them also wear half coat or jacket which may be coloured or white. On their heads, they put on white Gandhi cap or coloured cap. Many Barias and a few others tie 'safa' over their head. Some of the young men do not wear anything on their head, but many persons who work on the fields wear 'safa' or dhotee over their heads to protect them from heat or cold. A large number of men wear shoes; some put on sandals, while some are barefooted for lack of means to buy footwear.

Adult women or married women wear "kabja"—blouse which covers their body over the waist, and "chania"—petticoat which covers the lower portion of the body from waist to feet. Over this chania and kabja they wear "sari." All these three are generally coloured and sometimes printed too. A good number of women wear "Sapats" or sandals.

Boys generally wear "lengha"—pyjamas—or shorts and shirt or paheran. All these may be white or coloured. Some boys wear caps and some do not.

Girls wear kabja and "chania," which is called "gaghari." Some girls wear "odhani" over this. "Odhani" is a small sari with length and width smaller than sari. A full-fledged Gujarati sari measures 5 yards in length and from 45 to 49 inches in width. Instead of kabja and gaghari, some girls wear frocks which are replacing the former.

Among muslims men wear either dhoti or lengha or pyjamas, their other clothing apparel being similar to that of Hindu men. Muslim women wear "surval" from waist to feet and "paheran"

covering hands and the body from neck to ankles. Over the paheran they wear "odhani." All these clothes may be coloured or white and sometimes they may be printed also. Men wear shoes or sandals and women wear "sapats" or sandals.

Most of the cloth is mill-made. Only a few persons wear hand-spun khadi or cloth woven on handlooms. The percentage of persons wearing fine and superfine cloth is small, while that of persons using coarse and medium cloth is considerably large. The Brahmins, the shop-keepers and men of means use more of fine cloth while cultivators, labourers and poor persons have to use more of thicker and rougher stuff.

The apparels are generally of cotton. But Brahmin, Vaishya, Lohana and some Patidar women and some other women also keep silk or artificial silk apparel, which they wear on festive occasions. Among Brahmins men too wear silk dhotees during caste dinners and some religious ceremonies.

The clothing of Rabaries is in striking contrast to that of other Hindus. Rabari men wear very thick short dhotee, a short tight waist coat with scores of 'folds' fluttering round their waist, and long narrow sleeves extending to their waist, and a white or red 'safa' over their head. Rabari women wear short thick woollen skirts, cover their breasts with kapada and wear woollen odhani over both. Their attire is coloured, black, red, yellow, etc., and is sometimes studded with small, bright pieces of sparkling 'Abarak' or glasses. Only Rabaries have remained faithful to their ancient attire.

The following are the main differences in dress between the first and second survey:—

(1) Formerly adults were wearing turbans, some daily and some on occasions. Now hardly any one wears turbans. Instead, now many men wear caps and some go bare-headed.

(2) Even the wearing of 'safa' round the head has decreased greatly.

(3) The coloured cotton, silk or woollen caps or woollen coloured fur caps have been replaced by "Gandhi" caps which may or may not be khadi caps.

(4) Only a few men wear coats now. Long coat is hardly seen in the village.

(5) No Hindu adult male used to wear lenghas before. Now some of them do wear the same.

(6) Formerly, women used to wear "choli" or "kapadu" and later on "Polaka" with short flower, like blooming bulging sleeves, keeping their chest open in Victorian fashion. Now they have forsaken polkas and wear tight kabjas with tight sleeves.

(7) In case of girls, frocks are fast replacing gagharis and kabjas.

(8) Owing to the simplicity in clothing advocated by Mahatma Gandhiji, use of coats has decreased, and even "*khas*" also is hardly worn.

(9) Formerly much of cloth was foreign. Now most of the cloth is 'made in India.'

(10) In spite of the propaganda for the use of handspun khadi, consumption of handspun khadi is meagre.

(11) Consumption of fine cloth has been increasing.

HOUSING

The number of houses shown against some castes such as Brahmins, Vaishyas, Lohanas, Patidars, and Barias are more than the number of families in the castes. This is because some families have been staying out of Bhadkad and some families have become extinct. Barring a few exceptions the number of houses for each caste is generally even with the number of families in that caste. Compared to the houses of Barias, Dheds and Bhangies, houses of Brahmins, Vaishyas, Lohanas and Patidars are generally *pucca*, better and bigger. Most of the houses of the lower castes are *kachcha* and smaller; but the houses of Potter, Carpenter, Blacksmith and Barbers are "pucca" and better than those of Barias and Harijans. However, 2 houses belonging to Harijans are not only pucca but quite good also. A few houses belonging to Patidars have dexterous carving on wood on the front side of their buildings. But these are old ones. To have such carvings now would be quite a costly affair.

In the houses of upper castes, there is general evidence of greater affluence in the possession of articles of comfort and luxury than what we see in those of the lower castes. Moreover, in the former, there are signs of greater attention to cleanliness and orderly display than those in the latter. Poverty of the lower class is one of the chief reasons for this difference in upkeep and appearance.

The changes in housing are as under:—

(1) Many people have begun to understand the advantages of light and air; so some of them try to have as much of light and air in their houses as possible, and provide for more and bigger windows.

(2) Formerly men of means used to spend considerable money on carvings, decorations, etc., in their houses ; now, instead, they use their money in providing necessary facilities and conveniences in them.

(3) Formerly there were only a few separate rooms for kitchen, now their number has been increasing.

(4) Some persons have provided separate bathrooms in their houses. This is a new noticeable feature and a great convenience. There are no latrines, except one or two which are used by ladies and during nights.

(5) In old houses, the ground used to be dressed with cattle dung. Now some of the new houses have flooring of stone, cement or tiles. Now more cement is used in building houses.

(6) Formerly there were castor-oil lights in earthen bowls. They have been replaced by kerosene lanterns.

(7) In some houses chairs and tables have usurped the place of *gadies* and *takias*. 'Pais' are also hardly seen.

(8) Formerly all houses had roofs of "nalias;" now many have roofs of corrugated iron sheets.

(9) In some houses kerosene stove is used, in place of firewood for preparing food and hot drinks.

(10) In a number of houses, pictures of what are called "Leaders" have been eclipsing old patriots, heroes and gods.

SANITATION AND CLEANLINESS

Except for a small number of families who keep their houses and surroundings clean, many families keep bullocks or buffaloes in front of or near their houses with the result that the dung and urine of these cattle, along with refuse thrown here and there by residents make 'falias,' 'mahollas' and pathways, quite dirty. Besides children, even adults seem to have no civic consciousness. Government have ceased payment of salaries to Harijan sweepers, and the latter are absolved from the duty of sweeping and cleaning the village. In the absence of alternative local arrangement, voluntary or otherwise by any agency, the village remains unswept over long period ; only occasionally some leading persons in the village get the same swept by local sweepers, mostly by their personal influence.

Due to the housing of cattle in the same place, their dung, and urine, as well as other dirt, refuse etc., tend to the breeding of mosquitoes and bugs which suck the blood of men and cattle already emaciated for lack of nutritious food. Under economic pressure, a number of persons work under severe cold or in scorching heat under great physical strain. Some persons suffer through worries arising from economic or social difficulties, hardships, troubles and calamities. These are some of the main causes of ill-health and diseases in Bhadkad. During the first survey also, the village was noted for dirt, refuse etc. There were bugs, mosquitoes etc. which pestered people and cattle and affected their health. After very heavy rains, water used to collect in big pools around the village. This impeded passage and was detrimental to the health and sanitation of Bhadkad.

PREVALENT DISEASES

Cold, cough, malaria, asthma, lung troubles, pneumonia are the common diseases in the winter season, while in summer, people suffer from malaria, typhoid, diarrhoea, sprue and sometime cholera also. During the rainy season a number of persons are attacked by malaria and cough.

During the year 1954-55, 417 cases were registered in the Dispensary of Bhadkad, among which 261 were men and 156 women. The total number of days for which they took medicine is 1,087.

LITERACY

Out of 1,516 persons in Bhadkad, 352 are literate; they can read and write fairly well. This means that the percentage of literacy is 23. Of the 832 males, 297 are literate, and of the 684 females, 55 are literate. The percentage of literacy, among men and women are 35 and 8 respectively. Among the higher castes, literacy is higher in Brahmins, Vaishyas and Lohanas whose occupations need knowledge of the "Three Rs." Literacy is not high among Patidars who are mainly agriculturists. Among the lower or backward castes, literacy is good or fair among Garasias, Dadhus, Potters, Blacksmiths, Barbers, Golas, Ravals, Dheds, and Chamars, while it is less or much less among Gosaies, Rabaries, Barias, Bhois, Shoemakers, Vagharies and Harijans. Among the 2 Chamars—one male and one female, and the 2 adult Golas. One male and one female—the males alone are literate. The high percentage of literacy noted among the backward classes is due to the comparatively less number of women in these families. Literacy is high among Muslims.

As compared to the present position, in the previous survey, there were 303 literates out of a total population of 1,218 persons. So, lite-

racy has increased only 2 per cent (excluding the children attending school) including the children, the percentage of increase is from 25 to 34 that is 9 per cent only.

During the second survey among those who have received higher education, there is I B.A., LL.B., I Chartered Accountant, and I who has studied Engineering at Kala Bhavan Technical Institute at Baroda. Besides these persons, there are a few who have received higher education in Colleges or have passed Matriculation Examination ; but most of them have been staying out of Bhadkad, as they cannot find suitable gainful occupation in the village.

XIII

COMMUNICATION OF MODERN IDEAS AND KNOWLEDGE IN INDIAN VILLAGES*

Y. B. DAMLE

I. PROBLEM AND SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY

This paper embodies the findings of a field study made of communication of modern ideas and knowledge into some Indian villages. The importance of the problem of communication both for theoretical and practical purposes hardly needs to be stressed. In an age which believes in mutual aid, both material and non-material, the problem of communication assumes all the greater significance. The pattern of communication both intranational and international in no small way determines intranational and international relations:

The diffusion into seven villages of the following modern ideas and kinds of knowledge was studied.

1. Information about the national political scene: knowledge of leaders, how many national leaders are known and by how many persons.
2. Knowledge of national policies : who rules the nation ; division of the country ; social and economic policies of the state ; e.g., Five Year Plan, extension projects, community development projects, national bonds and loans ; secularism ; different ideologies, e.g., the capitalist, the socialist, and the communist ; abolition of untouchability and doing away with arbitrary differences between the two sexes and between different groups of people.
3. Knowledge about world political structure: awareness of the fact of the division of the world into two main camps, the American and the Soviet ; knowledge of world leaders and also of foreign policies ; knowledge about the location, meaning, and significance of Britain, U.S.A., France, Russia, China, Africa, Ceylon, Pakistan, Indo-China, etc. ; knowledge about the leaders of these countries.

*Reproduced from "Communication of Modern Ideas and Knowledge in Indian Villagers, by Y. B. Damle, pp. 1-22.

4. Knowledge of international policies and events : happenings in Korea ; Geneva ; American technical and financial aid ; U.S. arms Aid to Pakistan ; Russian and American tensions ; who are our friends and enemies ; can world problems be solved with the help of others ; whom should we befriend ; can India remain neutral ; if not, whom should we join.
5. Awareness of modern ideas regarding caste and religion ; extent of rationalism ; awareness of the modern concept of essential quality of all human beings.
6. Impact of new ideas, of recreation ; movies, radio, sports, etc.
7. How was this knowledge acquired : through contact with people, newspapers, lectures, political propaganda, etc.

This list of the items studied makes clear how the problem of communication has been tackled. Both intranational and international items of communication were analysed. Limited as the sample of each of these was, nevertheless, they brought out the relative predominance of knowledge of the former over the latter. To put it in another fashion, the perspective of the villages makes for greater communicability of certain items. An analysis of the functional relationships which affect the communicability of some ideas and the poor communicability of others would have implications for practical policy.

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURE

The seven villages selected for study have different degrees of relationship with the city. Their spatial distance from Poona (their nearest city) ranged from one to eighty miles so the functioning of external agencies in some of the villages affected their reception of communications.

It was felt that the problem should be analysed from the structure-functional point of view in order to tackle adequately its different ramifications, particularly that of differential communication mentioned just above. The structure-functional point of view has been neatly elaborated by Merton in his book *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Its framework of analysis is utilised. This does not, however, mean that there is a complete and unqualified acceptance of Merton's position.

Different tools were used to obtain the necessary information interviewing and observation were the main tools. The schedule containing the questions had sometimes to be kept in the background. Experience in the villages proves that greater information can be obtained by informal chats and discussions than by asking straight questions. The questions had to be mixed with a good deal of other conversation.

CHOICE OF THE VILLAGES

Cities have always been properly regarded as disseminators of ideas and knowledge. So in the choice of the villages to be studied the distance from Poona City was one of the most important considerations. The distances of the different villages selected for study are as follows :

1. Bopudi, on the outskirts of Poona City and now included within the City Corporation limits.
2. Subhashwadi (Manjri), 11 miles.
3. Muthe, 24 miles.
4. Andgaon, 26 miles.
5. Kondhur, 20 miles.
6. Ahupe, 80 miles.
7. Patan, 72 miles.

This lends itself to scale analysis, which is given later. The nearness or otherwise of a village to city would be of crucial importance in the process of communication.

III. FINDINGS

AMBEGAON TALUKA: 1. PATAN

Patan is 72 miles north-west of Poona City. To reach Patan one has to travel by a public bus up to Ambegaon (60 miles) and then trek the remaining 12 miles. Not even bullock carts can reach Patan since the path is through hills and jungles. In fact, the whole tract is formed by the ranges of the Sahyadri mountain. Patan is about 4,000 feet above sea level. The tract gets plenty of rain, ranging from 130 inches to 175 inches per year. It is primarily a rice-growing area and is famous for rice of good quality. Other cereals like nachani (*raggee*—a grain *cynosurus corocanus* of *elusine corocona*) and vari (the grain *coix barbata*) are also grown to supplement the diet of the people. In spite of this the people suffer from starvation for a couple of months a year. The village is surrounded on all four sides by hills and thus is isolated from the rest of the world. It is a tiny village with an area of 1.9 sq. miles and a total population of 51 persons.

Except for one household, that of the local Mahar who performed all sorts of functions from carrying message to scavenging, all other inhabitants are Mahadeo Koli. Mahadeo Koli is a Hindu tribe. Actually the epithet Mahadeo is derived from worship of the God Shankara, the Mahadeo (the big God). It is primarily an agricultural tribe. "It is probable that they (Kolis) are a mongrel race, and have sprung from alliances formed between Hindus and aboriginal tribes."

The Mahar is fed by every house in return for certain services he renders to the community.

Only one of the villages is literate, and he left the village more than a year ago and went to a suburb of Bombay to work as a labourer in a factory. Only four persons have seen a train. Only these four persons have had a ride in a motor bus, though the rest of the villagers have seen one as they have to go to Ambegaon every Wednesday to the weekly bazar to buy everything from salt and oil to clothes. None of them have seen Poona.

The Patil (Headman), four other persons, and the Mahar were interviewed. It must be said that there was no difficulty whatsoever in interviewing.

1. These people know about independence though not about the partition of the country. Only the Patil had seen Mahatma Gandhi when he went to Bombay in his young days. None, except for him, knows about Jawaharlal Nehru, his knowledge may be due to the functional relationship which such knowledge bears to the post of a patil. He is paid Rs. 40/- per month by the Government for discharging functions like collecting land revenue, maintaining law and order in the village, and reporting to the Taluka authorities if anything serious happens in the village.
2. Only the Patil knew that Jawaharlal Nehru ruled India. He did not know anything more about national policies.
3. Knowledge of world political structure: Nil.
4. Knowledge of international policies and events: Nil.
5. Awareness of modern ideas on caste and religion: Nil.
6. Only the Patil has seen a mythological movie in Bombay. He has also heard a loudspeaker in a meeting. No impact whatsoever of any new idea.
7. Some of them have attended election propaganda meetings. However, they have no faith in pre-election promises. Only during epidemics do they get medical aid from Government. No agency of communication has reached the village.

Patan thus presents the spectacle of a relatively simple structure untouched by any innovation. The tribal social structure is devoid of any effective contact with the outside world. The structure is static. No new item has become either functional or dysfunctional.

MULSHI TALUKA: 3. KONDHUR

Kondhur is 20 miles south-west of Poona City. To reach Kondhur one has to travel by a motor bus up to Urwade—20 miles—and then walk 10 miles, Kondhur is separated from Muthe by the river Mutha. The distance is just 4 miles. Yet the village is turned into an island during the monsoon. The average rainfall is 130 inches per year. In addition to the natural isolation, cultural isolation impinges on the local inhabitants as the Sarvodaya Centre has not extended its field of activities to Kondhur.

The total population of Kondhur is 841. A primary school is functioning there. However, the total number of literates is only 25. Kondhur is a primitive and a traditional village. Only four persons have been educated in Poona. No innovation has reached Kondhur. Despite the wishes of the people, whatever changes have been introduced in Muthe have not been introduced in Kondhur. The discrepancy between subjective dispositions and objective consequences is heightened by the inadequacy of the social structure. The inhabitants of Kondhur had the requisite motivation to incorporate new items but lacked the means to put it into effect.

Six persons were interviewed. One of them was an influential land owner, another was the Patil, (Headman) and the rest were cultivators.

1. People have heard about Morarji Desai, the Chief Minister of Bombay, Nehru, and Gandhi.
2. Only two persons have heard about Five Year Plan. People in general vaguely knew that the Indian Republic had declared itself to be a secular state. However, they did not at all approve. Secularism, they felt, is dysfunctional to the Indian social system. People also know that untouchability has been abolished by law but did not like it. This measure is dysfunctional to their social structure, which accords a lowly position to the Mahar (the untouchable). They knew about the partition of the country and the creation of Pakistan. Probably their knowledge of the happenings prior to the division of India makes them regard secularism as thoroughly dysfunctional.
3. Knowledge of world political structure : Nil.
4. Knowledge of international policies and events : Nil.
5. The people are aware of modern ideas about caste but strongly object to the same. A social structure which is based on a

particular system of relationship between different castes would naturally regard any attempt to change the system of relationship as a serious threat to its existence. Abolition of differences based on caste is thus very dysfunctional to their prevailing social structure.

6. Impact of new ideas of recreation: Nil.

7. New ideas and knowledge reached them through kinship and newspapers. Obviously, their reading of newspapers is not only very slight but also highly selective for world news was not noted or retained.

MUTHE

Muthe is 24 miles to the south-west of Poona City. A distance of 4 miles has to be covered on foot from Urwade to reach Muthe. Muthe is situated in the basin of the river Mutha. Its area is 4 sq. miles. The total population of Muthe is 1,490. The main occupation of the people is agriculture. Rice is the main crop. Pulses like beans are grown to a small extent. Trading in milch cattle is a subsidiary occupation of the people.

The Sarvodaya Centre was started three years ago. Since its inception medical care has been made available to the people of Muthe and neighbouring villages. The local medical officer in charge of the Sarvodaya dispensary, however, said that as many as 80 per cent of the people do not avail themselves of the medical facilities. In this context he made a very pertinent observation.

A mere provision of medical facilities is not adequate to solve the problems of villages (chronic poverty) as it reduced the natural immunity of the people of diseases. Besides modern medicines and treatment are so costly that the villages can ill-afford them. Economic improvement improved sanitation, etc. would be more useful under the circumstances.

In short, medical care rendered in isolation becomes dysfunctional for the majority of the people. The centre helps in putting people in touch with the authorities relevant to improvement in cultivation. However, this is functional only for the upper stratum since it entails capital expenditure. It is dysfunctional for the majority of the people and thereby strains the social structure. This may bring about change in the desired direction, viz. an agitation to make such items functional for all.

The Sarvodaya Centre has undertaken some activities which are functional for all the people e.g. building of pucca wells, inoculation

of people against cholera and plague, etc. The pit latrines and Khaddar are, however, functional only for a small group.

Interviews were held with four sets of people: (1) Mr. D. the local landlord and a popular person because of his helpfulness, (2) merchants and farmers, (3) the local priest, and (4) the medical officer in charge of the Sarvodaya dispensary, whose observations have already been recorded. Information, not to say a forthright analysis, came out not only on the problem on hand but also on the weakness of the social structure. It is recorded here since it throws a floodlight on the feelings of the people.

Mr. D. discussed the interrelationships among the different segments of the community and remarked that the Bara Balute system—a system which ensures occupational division of labour and interdependence is on the point of breaking down. He said “the Mahars no longer perform their traditional functions” and thus the first blow has been dealt to the system. Various factors—economic, political, legal—are responsible for this state of affairs. In short, the effort to register piecemeal improvement, e.g. abolition of untouchability, becomes positively dysfunctional for the entire system. It was further asserted by him that “people are craving for a change in their circumstances but they want such a change to be effected by some external agency. The springs of local leadership have almost dried out.” Inadequate social structure, structural constraints, and the impact of external influence on the marginal areas of the social structure are hindering any change for the better.

The most pertinent point made by the farmers and merchants concerned.

the draining of Muthe of its youth and the consequent dissipation of the springs of enthusiasm and activity. Besides, the youths who go out to work come back alienated from the village folks. They are only worried about their own pleasure pursuits, develop a condescending attitude toward the people and do not mix with them. If anything, they have an adverse impact on the people. Being dissipated physically, mentally, and morally they cannot in any way become useful to the community.

The pull of the cities thus proves tremendously dysfunctional to the entire system.

The local priest, who is well versed in the scriptures and is accorded respect by the people, pointed out that about four hundred persons have migrated to cities for employment. He further said: “these people cannot wield any influence on the village folk owing to their lowly occupational position.” They convey a good deal of in-

formation, but for that reason it does not bring about any change. To bring about change the persons who desire it must enjoy social esteem. Communication is also conditioned by status.

1. Most of the people know about ministers of Bombay State, Nehru, Gandhi, Namdeorao Mohol (the local Congress member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly).
2. People know about the Congress rule. It is through the work of construction undertaken by Government that they have an awareness of the Five Year Plan, extension projects, community development projects. Whatever is visible impresses them. The people, however, feel that most of the improvements can be availed of only by the higher stratum. Thus improved methods of cultivation, medical facilities, communication, and transport can be used only by the richer section. These items are functional for a particular stratum and are dysfunctional for the system as a whole. People know about the abolition of untouchability but do not approve of it. This item is dysfunctional for them.
3. People in general know nothing about world political structure, not even about Pakistan. Except for the medical officer everyone else was in the dark about it.
4. The same holds good in respect to recent international events.
5. There is awareness of the new ideas relating to caste religion, and rationalism, but there is no acceptance of these ideas. People feel that these ideas are not at all suitable for adoption by them under their present circumstances. Structural constraints and inadequacy of social structure prevent these ideas from being functional.
6. Traditional methods of recreation are in operation. The yearly fair held in honour of the local deity continues to be the clearing-house for ideas and objects. The fair is largely attended by people from the neighbouring villages. The old forms of recreation such as folk dances, wrestling matches, *tamasha* (a form of folk dramatics) persist even now. The Sarvodaya Centre made many efforts to replace *tamasha*, which sometimes verges on obscenity and indulges in rousing the sex impulses of the people, by plays which convey some moral, but such attempts have met with signal failure. The reason for this seems to be the insistence on the part of the people on allowing themselves indulgence in such revalries once in a while to remove the monotony of drab existence. This is perfectly understandable in a situation in which sex is the main recreation, owing to the drab existence enforced on the majority of the people by force of circumstances. Moral preaching which is devoid of any consideration for the material aspects of well-being is dysfunctional to the system.

7. New ideas and knowledge reached the people through the Sarvodaya Centre, the local M.L.A., contact with Poona and Bombay through relatives and friends.

Muthe furnishes a classical example of the inability of an external agency to register any improvement in the life of a people by tinkering with the problem at a surface level. Neglect of structure is bound to lead such effort to failure. Neither the structural nor the functional aspect can be neglected. Structure also needs to be changed so as to be compatible with an adequate functioning of items of improvement. Equally important is the moral that structure needs to be strengthened from within and not from without. Communication of ideas and knowledge has constant impact on the social structure. To be able to withstand this impact successfully and to render it functional, the system of interrelations between different components of a structure needs readjustment. In short, the dynamic aspect cannot be neglected.

POONA CITY TALUKA: 7. BOPUDI

Bopudi is situated on the northern border of Poona City. Its population is in the neighbourhood of 5,000. Since 1951 Bopudi has been included in the Poona City Municipal Corporation area. In fact, the village is next to Kirkee which has an ammunition factory and an ordnance depot. Naturally, the workers try to stay in the vicinity of the factory. During the last six years four other industrial works factories have been installed near Bopudi. Bopudi thus has become a factory workers' nest. Hardly 3 per cent of its inhabitants can be classed as cultivators. The original inhabitants, who were mainly agriculturists, have been swamped by the surging tide of factory labourers. The local Patil (the Headman) very much regretted the change and remarked that "it is very difficult for me to know who is who in the village." The nature of the work and the hours of work in the factories militate against any composite life. There is a conglomeration of people, whose structural unity has been left undeveloped. The shifting nature of the population only heightens the process. The old structure has been submerged and a new one adequate to cope with the changing needs of the people has not been created. One illustration will suffice. The place still has the same sanitary facilities which it had eighteen years ago. The increase in the population has reduced these to a mockery. Structural development has not taken place at all. The sheer nearness of Poona City also accentuates this process. The city has become the centre of attraction in everything from education and entertainment to politics. Items like the school, market, cinema houses have ceased to be functional for a big subgroup. The impact of the neighbouring structure is simply overwhelming. So the already inadequate structure almost vanishes into thin air. There is no local leadership of any sort. People look toward the city for

leads in every walk of life. The spirit of self-dependence has almost dried up. Naturally, the people made insistent demands on the municipal corporation for working out the necessary changes. A mobile dispensary has been started by the corporation and many people avail themselves of the medical facilities provided by the same. Recently, roads have been lighted by electricity. But many important needs such as good and adequate water supply, sanitary facilities etc., remain unattended to. Recently, a new school building was constructed by the corporation and a public library was also started. However, the response has not been encouraging as everyone depends on the same body to persuade and cajole them to make use of the same. Local action is conspicuous by its absence. And thus such items become non-functional, i.e., irrelevant to the people.

Interviews were held with eight factory workers. Many others were also present at the time of discussion. Many people have been educated up to vernacular second to fourth standards. Some of them read newspapers daily and as such were conversant with recent events and happenings. The growing unemployment has been worrying people considerably. Pessimism and indifference on the part of the people toward events and happenings is the outcome.

1. There is awareness of the different political parties in India, e.g., the Congress, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the Hindu Mahasabha, etc. People know of Nehru, Azad, Morarji Desai, and some of the ministers of the Bombay State, Jayaprakash Narayan and Ashok Mehta—both of them are Socialist leaders.
2. There is awareness of national policies on the part of those who read newspapers, i.e. about 20 per cent of the people. People knew about secularism and abolition of untouchability etc. They felt, however, that "differences could not be obliterated unless groups like the untouchables became powerful—economically, educationally and politically." Piecemeal improvement would not be of much use according to them. There was awareness of the different prevailing ideologies—the capitalist, the socialist, and the communist. No definite preference was expressed for any particular ideology. All that they desired was employment for all and better amenities of life.
3. Those who read newspapers and some others, too, know that India is friendly with China and the U.S.A. in spite of the arms aid to Pakistan. People know about England, though not about her leader. Division of the country is known to them as the same became dysfunctional for them owing to the influx of Hindu refugees. The refugees competed with them for jobs, housing, etc.
4. India's efforts for the establishment of peace are known by the people. There is a general feeling that India must avoid conflict.

5. People know about modern ideas relating to caste, religion, etc. but do not completely approve of them. They want to emphasise the importance of religious worship. They have a temple, which has become the meeting ground for people. The latent function of the temple as a meeting place has been transformed into a manifest function. Rationalism is accepted by the people for its utility and not as a value. There is a superficial acceptance of rationalism, but it is not ingrained in the people.
6. There are a couple of radio sets in the village. Most of the people have seen movies. There is almost no change in their methods of recreation.
7. Modern ideas and knowledge have reached them through newspapers and contact with Poona City. No political party works amongst them.

The stunted development of social structure in Bopudi constitutes the major drawback of the system. Modern ideas and knowledge cannot become functional in such a system. The impact of a powerful neighbouring structure perpetuates structural weaknesses of a system. Sometimes there is a possibility of an outward show of strength. Thus if Bopudi were studied superficially, the student might be impressed with the changes that have taken place. Analysing the situation from the structure-functional point of view, one learns the essential structural weaknesses and the consequent inefficient functioning or even dysfunctioning of certain items. Structure needs to be strengthened to ensure effective functioning of a system. Mere influx of ideas and knowledge fails to attain the desired consequences. The gap or discrepancy between subjective motivations and objective consequences arises out of the nature of a structure as is evidenced in the case of Bopudi.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Certain broad conclusions emerge from this study. These pertain to methodological, theoretical, and practical fields. As to methodology, it has been proved that the problem of communication can be adequately tackled from the structure-functional point of view. As is revealed by the scalogram, it is not merely the distance from or nearness to the city which facilitates communication of ideas and knowledge. Rather it is the nature of structure which also determines the qualitative and quantitative content of communication. This aspect needs further empirical study. Merton's paradigm is validated. As for the theory of communication of modern ideas any knowledge, the study reveals the necessity of analysing the dependent, interdependent, and independent variables. So many problems are posed. Is communication a one-way process? Is it two-way? If so, what are the

factors which make it so? Is there anything inherent in the socio-economic-political structure of a country which determines the content of communication of ideas and knowledge? Thus, for example, is it the realization of the structural weakness which makes for a wide dissemination of ideas relating to untouchability, caste, religion, etc? At the level of reception of ideas it has been found that whatever is visible appeals to the people, e.g., the Five Year Plan, community development projects, etc. Then again it has been found that the structural constraints and inadequacies, whether natural or imposed by circumstances, e.g. by the impact of a powerful neighbouring structure, render certain ideas and knowledge dysfunctional. This naturally leads to a process of change. There are two possibilities in this connection: one is that the recipient structure may be modified or strengthened to render functional such items; the other is that the realization of the dysfunctional nature of such items may lead to their being discarded by the original disseminating agency and thus the reestablishment of a position of equilibrium may be facilitated even at the cost of a loss of face, e.g., what the medical officer in Muthe suggested in respect to the use of medicines and drugs amounts to this. Does communication follow the lines of stratification? This aspect also needs empirical investigation. As for the practical aspect, the study offers some suggestions. First of all, creating motivation without corresponding effort to create the necessary conditions for the fulfilment of the same leads to frustration. Otherwise, the usual spectacle of discrepancy between subjective motivation and objective consequences will persist. The needs and aspirations of the people ought to be considered before launching new ideas and knowledge. Actually, the necessary atmosphere can be created for the absorption of new ideas and knowledge—even some bitter pills like the new ideas relating to caste, religion, untouchability, etc., can be swallowed by first attending to the felt needs of the people. External agencies have very many limitations and these limitations cannot be got rid of except by fulfilling certain fundamental needs of the people, e.g., by ensuring a higher standard of living to all the people. This would also presuppose an absence of any strings to any aid from such external agencies.

SECTION VI

**AGRARIAN UNREST
IN INDIA**

I

AGRARIAN UNREST AFTER INDEPENDENCE*

H. D. MALAVIYA

There was visible among the peasantry a growing restlessness which took the form of violent and deadly clashes between the zamindars and kisans every now and then. The peasants increasingly began to resist evictions and *begar*. The zamindars, having wealth and power, started to organise themselves and to resist the plans for zamindari abolition of Congress Ministries which had come to power after the 1946 General Elections. The forces of revolutionary socialism made full use of the situation and under the hammer and sickle flag, thousands of peasants were organised to forcibly sow or reap the fields which they claimed belonged to them, and from which the zamindars were forcibly evicting them.

Indeed, things seemed to be heading towards a show-down. For a time it appeared as though nothing will stop a bloody and violent conflict in the countryside. In the months preceding India's Independence on August 15, 1947, and in the period following it, the

*Reproduced from "Village Panchayats in India," by H. D. Malaviya, pp. 206-210.

entire countryside in India witnessed ceaseless agrarian conflicts. To complete the picture we would give a brief account of the situation in Uttar Pradesh.

AGRARIAN VIOLENCE IN U.P. DURING 1947-49

Agrarian riots became marked in U.P. in early 1947. A party of zamindars attacked the residents of village Hamirpur in district Sultanpur, destroying the crops and looting the houses. A few months after one person was killed and five others received injuries when a party of men headed by a zamindar attacked the peasants of village Kaima in the same district. A few days earlier, the same paper has reported, parties of kisans and zamindars clashed over an agrarian dispute in village Bamori in Jhansi district, resulting in the death of two zamindars and injuries to half a dozen persons. Such clashes continued through 1948, and, it would appear, assumed serious proportions in 1949. In March 1949, an armed mob led by zamindars attacked kisans in village Shahpur in district Ballia, as a result of which one Socialist worker was reported killed, many injured, of which two were removed to the hospital in a serious condition. In village Shahwazpur in Ghazipur district, a mob of 2,000 attempted to rescue from a police party some "women members of the Communist Party for allegedly instigating villagers against a zamindar," and was fired upon by the police. This was in July. In August, 40 zamindars armed with lathis attacked a meeting of kisans at village Rampur in Ballia. The Secretary of the District Socialist Party was injured. Another worker of the Party "was caught hold of by the zamindars when he lay wounded, who dragged him about. When he began to show signs of collapse they threw him away at some place outside the village. After this orgy of violence the zamindars looted the house of tenants of the village." There was trouble again at Tahirpur village in Ballia on September 8, leading to firing by the police resulting in one death and some injuries.

The eastern districts of U.P. were not the only areas of agrarian trouble. In April 1949, a deputation of peasants from village Bahroli waited on the Chief Minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, soon after which, on April 13, the zamindars attacked the *chamars* of the village burning their houses, etc. The *National Herald* (of 4-5-49) reported a serious clash between kisans and landlords in village Amauli Kalan of district Barabandi. Towards the end of May there was trouble in village Johawanakati in district Rae Bareilly leading to police firing and three deaths. There was an agrarian riot in village Bishanpur in Malihabad sub-division of district Lucknow, following which a zamindar and 12 of his supporters were arrested. A week later there was an agrarian dispute in village Mastamall in Gossaiganj police circle of the same district resulting in one death and many injuries. The Press Trust of India reported from Banaras on June 27, 1949, the death of 8 per-

sons and injuries to many in a clash between agricultural labourers and a party of zamindars on June 24, on the border of Mirzapur and Banaras districts. The trouble broke out when labourers refused to carry manure to the zamindar's land. Another serious agrarian riot was reported from Tanda in Faizabad district in which 2 men were killed and 8 injured seriously in a *lathi* fight between zamindars' men and tenants over the cultivation of paddy field. No wonder, therefore, that a spokesman of U.P. Government said at Lucknow on August 4, 1949: "Agrarian riots in the rural areas of U.P. have shown in upward trend as a result of the increasing class consciousness among tenants and zamindars." He disclosed that the total number of riots upto July 15, 1949, was 2,057; for the corresponding period last year the figure was 1,878. A majority of them were attributed to property feuds and quarrels over possession of land. The spokesman said: "Though crime against person has decreased, crime against property has shown an upward trend."

ZAMINDARI ABOLITION AVERTS CLASS VIOLENCE

It is clear from the foregoing that violence was in the air in post-Independence years in our countryside. The atmosphere was tense and the rural society had the germs within it which could lead to a bloody consummation. The incorporation of the demand for the abolition of the intermediary system in the Congress Election Manifesto of 1946, and the decision of the U.P. Assembly, on August 8, 1947, to abolish the zamindari system, contributed largely to pacify the simmering volcano that the countryside had become. Thakur Hukum Singh, then U.P.'s Revenue Minister, very rightly told Pressmen at Jhansi on December 10, 1946: "If the U.P. Government had not taken this drastic and revolutionary step, the politically and class conscious peasantry would have risen in revolt and whole of the province would have been in the grip of a great conflict."

THE ALL-INDIA KISAN SABHA IN POST-INDEPENDENCE YEARS

In subsequent years this policy of abolition of peasant exploitation by the landed classes was extended to other States. This, along with other socio-economic policies of the Congress and its Governments, have very largely contributed to the development of India on peaceful lines. The other trend, however, still persists. After the A.I.K.S. was split at Bihta in 1941, the different left groups never succeeded in uniting again in one organisation. In post-Independence years the Socialists organised their Hind Kisan Panchayat. The Revolutionary Socialist Party and other left groups constituted a United Kisan Sabha under the presidentship of the veteran revolutionary Shri Jogesh Chandra Chatterji. None of these organisations, however, have succeeded in making any headway. The parent body, the All-India Kisan Sabha, under Communist influence, has gone from

strength to strength in post-Independence years. Some of the biggest organized Kisan struggles were fought under its leadership between 1946 and 1950. Mention may be made of the struggle of the Warlis in Maharashtra during 1946-47. In Bengal, the *Tebhaga* Movement (that is, struggle for reduction of landlord's share of the produce from half to one-third) developed in most of the districts and succeeded in getting an assurance from the Government that it accepted the *Tebhaga* principle. In Andhra, throughout the zamindari areas, peasants began to occupy lands from which they had been removed and there were no-rent-campaigns in many estates. In Travancore, the peasants and agricultural workers, joined by demobilised army men, fought against the landed classes and there were armed clashes with the Maharajah's army, resulting in innumerable deaths. In Malabar also the Kisan Sangham became powerful and led many long drawn-out kisan struggles.

The most violent and bitter of these peasant struggles were waged in Telengana, Tripura and Manipur. The peasant armed struggle in Telengana took the form of guerilla action against the Razakars, and later against the forces of the Indian Union. A parallel government was established in about 2,500 villages and, according to Communist claims 10,00,000 acres of land were seized from the landed classes and distributed among the agricultural labourers and poor peasants. A regular guerilla fighting unit was organised and when routed in the plains they retired to the hills and forests and continued so till September 1951, when the violent movement was finally withdrawn. No exact figures are known of the total casualty in the Telengana area, but the death roll is supposed to be near about three to four thousand.

II

INTER-CASTE TENSIONS*

D. N. MAJUMDAR AND OTHERS

In most of the villages in Uttar Pradesh, for example, the dominant element has been a particular caste, a Thakur, rarely a Brahmin or a Muslim pedigreed family who has ruled the village and has kept the various castes on the rails, by organising a kind of inter-dependent and symbiotic relationship with the dominant caste at the apex of the pyramidal social structure, and a traditional division of function and services between the castes. The customary code of rural life with its pattern of obligations, its stress and strain, its virtues and vices, has functioned to maintain a status structure, however inequitable its role might have been. There is to be noticed a passive conformity to the rural code of duties and services. Loyalty and co-operation that exist among the castes inhabiting a village have been, we are often told, always spontaneous, but a deeper knowledge of rural life reveals that this loyalty and co-operation are sometimes ordered. Political leadership has been on the caste pattern and in a village dominated by the Thakur, the leadership is in their hands. Consequent upon the abolition of the *zamindari* system and in villages with absentee landlords, the initiative for leadership has passed from the former leaders to the elders of the village, though even today the dominant caste or castes exert their influence and enjoy certain privileges. The village today in most parts of the country is becoming a venue for trial of strength among numerically larger castes and inter village relations are being strengthened to keep the traditional status roles functioning. The lower castes in earlier days had some vertical mobility in the caste-ladder, but with the horizontal organisation in the villages today on intra-caste level, social mobility is also tending to be horizontal, so that a Chamar or a Pasi need not look up to the higher castes in the village for recognition of their social claims or aspirations, but they find in their caste organisation the key to social capillarity. This is a development which has become manifest in the process of cultural change.

Chamars are considered the lowest caste and are regarded as untouchables. They are not allowed to touch the utensils or person of a Thakur. The same is true of the Bhaksors.

The Chamars are very dissatisfied with their present humiliating and degrading position in society. They were very often taken on

*Reproduced from Rural Profiles, edited by D. N. Majumdar, pp. VII, 82-86.

begar (forced labour) by the Thakur landlords. Last year Gokaran Chamar was employed in digging a canal, earning about Rs. 2/-, according to the amount of clay he dug. One of the Thakurs, Jaskaran Singh, took him forcibly to his house and made him work there the whole day. In the evening he gave him only 8 annas. There was another similar instance of *begar*. Makhana Chamar was going to his work. Raghubir Singh asked him to cut the *bandh* (dam) at the tank. Makhana was forced to oblige the Thakur. He worked at the tank without getting any money for the work he did. Apart from taking *begar*, the Thakur landlords also take away their (Chamar's) vegetables either forcibly or surreptitiously. Raghubir Singh, Ahibaran Singh and Maharaj Singh very often grab their vegetables. But now-a-days a Chamar resents doing *begar* for any one. He gives a flat refusal, even if money wages are offered. This is because the Chamars now work in the fields and so money does not matter much to them. A Chamar will only accept to work if he is in need of money.

Some of the Chamars are thinking of equality and assimilation with the higher castes. With this end in view they refuse to take food with the Dhobies and Bhaksors. They refuse to lift the *pattals* after the dinner parties of high caste people, and to eat the residual of food on the *pattals*. They accept only the *parosa* (servings) of fresh food.

Formerly the Chamars, Pasis and Bhaksors were not allowed to draw water from the wells in the village. They had to use the water from the *talab* (tank) even for drinking purposes. But now they freely use the wells along with people of the high castes. A Chamar is allowed to draw water from a Thakur's well now. The Thakurs, however, do not draw water from a well belonging to the Chamars. Today the Chamars have a say in the village *Panchayat* which they did not have some two years ago. There is a desire among the Chamars to lead a respectable life. That is why they refuse to work for the higher castes even when money wages are offered to them.

The lower castes are resentful of the unhelpful attitude of the higher caste people, who always try to humiliate them whenever they get the chance. Lakhai Chamar was once coming to the village with some tanned hides on the carrier of his bicycle. He had avoided passing through the village and had taken a longer route, outside the village. But while near the village, he espied a person who seemed to be a Brahmin. Lakhai rang his cycle bell vigorously to announce himself. The Brahmin let him pass. But when he recognized Lakhai as a Chamar he began shouting at him. Two other high caste passers-by stopped Lakhai. The Brahmin abused Lakhai and hit him on the plea that the hides smelt and had polluted him. After a good beating, Lakhai was asked to be more careful in future and avoid the Brahmin on the streets by taking a different route.

On another occasion Makhana Chamar was severely rebuked for touching a water bucket belonging to the *Sarpanch*, Jadoo Nath Singh, Sukhraj Singh caught Makhana touching the bucket and scolded him. Ahibaran Singh, Gajadhar and Jadoo Nath Singh joined Sukhraj Singh and threatened Makhana with a good beating. He was asked to get the bucket cleaned by a Nai and asked to be more careful in future. After finishing his work there, Makhana got a Nai to clean the bucket and hand it over to the Thakurs.

Chamars generally belong to the labour class. They do all kinds of work besides agriculture, for instance, repairing of houses, cutting wood for fuel, and working as labourers on daily wage. Very few own their own land, as they are usually agricultural labourers, working on other people's land on a daily wage of 8 annas or on Rs. 15/- to Rs. 16/- a month. Murari Singh has employed Gokaran Chamar, Makhana Chamar and Putti Chamar to work on his fields for a monthly payment of Rs. 16/- and one shirt a year, each. Some of the Chamars also cultivate land on *Batai*, giving half of the produce to the owner of the land. Chhota Chamar works on Ahibaran Singh's land on *Batai*. The Thakurs dictate the most ruthless terms to the Chamars who take their fields as share croppers.

CLASHES: AHIRS *versus* THAKURS

Last year an incident took place which shows that the relations between Thakurs and Ahirs are not as close and cordial as they profess them to be. Vishwanath Singh (Mukhia) told us that the Ahirs had called a meeting at *Holi* last year and decided they would not allow the Thakurs to carry the *phag* and sing the *kabirs* in their (Ahirs') *mohalla*. *Phag* is the procession of men who sing songs and play *Holi*. All the castes of the village are represented in the *phag*. *Kabirs* are sung by the Thakurs alone. When the Thakurs came to know about the decision of the Ahirs, they called a meeting of all the Thakurs and determined to carry the *phag* and *kabir* procession at any cost. So, on the *Holi* day the Thakurs took out the procession and went armed with *lathis* and *ballam* (spear). They sang the *kabirs* and marched through the Ahirs' *mohalla*, singing and playing *Holi*. None of the Ahirs came forward to face them or interfere with the procession. The festival was observed very peacefully. This year the Ahirs also took part in all the festivities of *Holi* without any grudge or ill-feeling towards the Thakurs.

Like the other lower castes, the Pasis have been making an attempt to rise in their social status. The attempt was first made in 1939, when Ajodhya Prasad (Pasi) of Girdhar-ka-Purva village, district Bara Banki, wrote a pamphlet. The pamphlet was published on 20th March, 1939. It said that the Pasis belonged to a high caste. They were the *Sewak* (servants) of the *Jati* (caste system). They were the

trusted confidants of the Thakurs. An appeal was made to the Pasis to cultivate cleanliness, to give up liquor and eating meat, to acquire good habits, to live together in unity, and to educate their children. Moreover, the pamphlet urged the Pasis to try to rise in their social status. They should do no petty and humiliating work because they belonged to a clean caste. They should not accept *kachcha* food from the Thakurs or any other caste, except the Brahmins. As a symbolic expression of their claim to superiority, they were to wear the *janew* (sacred thread).

The pamphlet was circulated in the neighbouring villages to arouse enthusiasm among the Pasis. But this growing enthusiasm among the Pasis was curbed by World War II and the rigorous control of the Zemindari system. In 1949, when the rumour went round that the Zemindari system would be abolished, the matter was taken up again. In the last week of June, 1949, a meeting of the Pasis was called in Itaunja. Ajodhya Prasad (the author of the pamphlet) addressed the meeting. Chhedra, Autar Divan, and Kali Din represented Gohana village at the meeting. The pamphlet was widely circulated.

Another meeting was called in July, 1949, in Gohana Kallan of eight or nine neighbouring villages. It was decided in the meeting that the Pasis would not accept *kachcha* food from any of the higher castes, except the Brahmins. Instead, they would accept only uncooked food or *seedha*. Immediately after the meeting, the Pasis started wearing *janew*. The Thakurs were infuriated when they heard of the Pasis' decision to refuse to accept *kachcha* food from them. They forbade the Pasis from grazing their cattle in their (Thakurs') fields and pastures.

In the last week of July, 1949, the Thakurs called the Village *Panchayat* in Gohana Kallan. The Thakurs decided to boycott the Pasis in every possible respect. Furthermore, they forced the other castes to socially boycott the Pasis and refuse to have anything to do with them. As a consequence, the Chamars refused to carry the carcass of the cattle belonging to the Pasis. The Bhaksorin refused to attend on a Pasi woman at child-birth. Similarly, the Nais would not shave a Pasi. The Barahai and Lohar both refused to provide agricultural implements to the Pasis. The Pasis were faced with a complete social boycott by all the castes.

In the second week of September, 1949, the Thakurs stopped all sorts of grants given to the Pasis, and took back their gifts of free land (*Mafi* land) for cultivation from them.

The Pasis reported this to the Police, and called a meeting of all the Pasis. Alam *Darogha* (sub-inspector) from the Mandion *Thana* took two constables with him to prevent any quarrel that might take

place at the meeting. The Police inspector went to Vishwanath Singh (Mukhia) to ask the Thakurs to attend the meeting. Vishwanath Singh said that the Pasis would be sitting on *charpois* and *takhat* or cot and the Thakurs would be offended to sit with them. The Thakurs would go only if the sub-inspector undertook the responsibility of making all the Pasis sit on the ground. Thus the other refused to undertake. Hence none of the Thakurs attended the meeting.

Diwan Pasi (50 years old) addressed the meeting and said, "If the Thakurs do not want to see us wearing the *janew*, let them shut their eyes."

The Pasis had appealed to the Police to restore their land to them. The Police investigated into the matter and told the Pasis that the land belonged to the Thakurs and the Pasis had no legal claim on the land. This free grant of land depended solely on the pleasure of the Thakurs and hence their confiscating the land was justifiable. The Police could do nothing for the Pasis in this matter.

In the month of *Katik* (Oct-Nov) the Thakurs forbade the Pasis from irrigating their fields with *Beri*. The Pasis were hard hit, especially the poor ones and they wanted to give in to the Thakurs. Bishambhar and Rameshwar, two poor Pasis of the village, urged the Pasis to end their strife and give in to the Thakurs. The more well-to-do Pasis like Lachhman and Chheda, were adamant and refused to budge an inch. Lootoo (the village *Chowkidar*) acted as a spy, supplying the Thakurs with all the information about this rift among the Pasis. But the Pasis could not for long maintain their position. They had to bow down before the Thakurs. In order to please the Thakurs and win back their favour, the Pasis gave up wearing *janew* in the month of *Poos* (Dec.-Jan.). The Thakurs say they did not force the Pasis to give up wearing the *janew*, the Pasis themselves gave it up, realising the odds against them.

The foregoing description of functional relationship between castes indicate the dynamics of the caste structure in the rural setting. In a closed and symbiotic arrangement, co-operation and conflict both are manifest, but conflict does not assume ugly proportion, due to the social brakes applied by the dominant caste or castes. As leadership rests in the dominant castes and an interdependence in economic life becomes a necessity in a self sufficing economic unit like that of a village, the castes run on the rails and the passive co-operation of the numerous castes is equated with rural peace and tranquility. To-day, after the abolition of Zemindari and the frequent contacts the villages have with urban and immigrant people, the cloak of solidarity has been pierced and the functional relationships have been undergoing reorientation. It is as a social scientist put it, birth followed by decay and decay by rebirth. A new type of inter-caste rela-

tions is shaping in the villages, in which the old attitudes are being slowly transformed, and what is in the offing, is not tension or hostility, but greater concern for group survival, and an evaluative code of inter-caste patterns of behaviour.

There is a general complacency about our village solidarity and integration. We have idolised our village life and find human response in the cry of 'go back to the village.' But we need to know what has been and what the village life is shaping into, before we fall a prey to panegyrics. We need to emphasise microcosmic study of Indian rural life to enable us to form correct perspectives about our rural life. Any action therapy must necessarily be oriented to the 'facts of rural life'.

III

PANCHAYAT ELECTION IN U.P.—A REVIEW*

H. D. MALAVIYA

As we have stated in the beginning of this Chapter, in accordance with the provisions of the amended Panchayat Raj Act, in the last fortnight of December, the State became engaged in a gigantic electoral undertaking in which more than 2,00,00,000 adult villagers in 41 districts were called upon to exercise their franchise to choose presidents and members of about 55,000 Panchayats. The elections followed those held in the five hill districts in October-November. Polling for 12,929 Panchayats in the eastern districts of Azamgarh, Basti, Gorakhpur, Deoria and Ballia, which had not recovered from the ravages of floods and where the administration was engaged in relief work, was postponed to February. About 70,000 people were drafted to conduct the polling which was fixed for different days in various sectors into which districts were divided for administrative convenience. These Village Panchayats, numbering about 73,000 representatives of nearly 1,44,000 rural constituencies began a five-year term from the beginning of the new financial year under the new Act.

The polling was held by show of hands at public meetings. An analysis of the nominations showed that the contest was keener for the office of the *Pradhans* (presidents) of Panchayats which carries considerable influence. On the other hand, membership of Panchayats went abegging at many places and by-elections will have to be held to fill vacant seats.

The Government received about 500 representations against decisions on nomination papers, but it was decided not to intervene. There might have been cases where nomination papers were wrongly rejected, but it was felt that intervention would mean inviting more trouble by opening the way for calling into question nomination papers held valid. The number of invalid nominations was large because of the difficulty of proving age (minimum fixed at 30 years for candidates for presidentship) and of the condition that tax arrears would disqualify a candidate. It is estimated that Panchayat taxes are in arrears to the extent of about 70 per cent.

*Reproduced from Village Panchayats in India, by H. D. Malaviya, pp. 322-325.

A heartening example of women's interest came from Dhawaka village in Mau tehsil in Jhansi District where there were 22 candidates, including 19 women, for 19 seats. Women seemed determined to make it their own Panchayat. Reports of similar interest by village women was received from other parts of the State as well.

Nyaya Panchayats will be formed later by official nomination from among members of the Panchayats. On the last occasion they were elected. The new procedure is aimed to raise the Nyaya Panchayats above electoral conflicts without taking away from villagers their right to have their own Panches.

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

The special correspondent of *The Hindustan Times* made the following significant observation on these elections. "No political party is officially contesting the elections, but individual political workers and members of kisan organisations are taking active interest. Legislators have kept aloof because they cannot run the risk of taking sides within their own constituency. At most places the electorate is divided as between two strong men of the village, and often this division corresponds to the division on caste lines. The last elections saw lower castes and backward classes combine against the higher castes. This tendency is in evidence again." According to another report : "In the Plains districts elections are not unanimous or unopposed. On the contrary, there exists serious conflict between factions, groups and individuals. Analysis of filed nominations shows that on an average there are three candidates for each seat." A report in this same paper from Kanpur, dated December 12, tells of the shooting in broad daylight of a candidate for the *Pradhan* office in Sajeti Police Station of the district. The report added : "As the elections draw near, the supporters of the candidates are intensifying propaganda on communal and caste lines as a result of which the atmosphere is becoming more and more bitter." In a letter to editor, published in *Arthik Sameeksha*, from a correspondent of village Shahadgarhi, district Bulandshahar, severe allegations have been made about malpractices and bribery by Panchayat officials in the Village Panchayat elections and *lathis* and spears being drawn in the course of the elections, though it did not fortunately end in actual clash.

In fact, *The Hindustan Times* reported on December 23, 1955 : "The current fortnight has become a period of vigil and prayer for the law and order authorities in U.P. Reports received here speak of clashes, some of them involving deaths, in a number of districts including Kanpur, Mathura, Saharanpur, Bareilly and Barabanki. Some trouble was, of course, apprehended, considering the magnitude of the undertaking and the fact that these elections touch the rural population more intimately than those to the legislature and Parliament."

IV

PANCHAYATS AND VILLAGE CONFLICTS*

H. D. MALAVIYA

Commenting on the Barabanki murders of two Uttar Pradesh M.L.A.s, New Delhi's esteemed *Hindustan Times* wrote : "The ancestors of quite a few big landlords were those who practised outlawry and later settled down under British rule as acknowledged leaders of the countryside. The temptation to revive the old profession is great at a time when zamindari has been abolished and elections to Panchayats, local bodies and legislatures provide the excuse for mobilising caste groups and goonda elements."

THE BARABANKI MURDERS

The Barabanki murders, in fact, underline, as nothing else does, the conflicts that currently prevail in our countryside, and a brief account of the episode would be relevant for our discussion. In September, 1955, a Congress M.L.A., Shri Bhagwati Prasad Shukla, was murdered by unknown assassins while he was cycling to the District Court. Of this event, and the subsequent enquiries, we have hardly any information. A flood of light, however, has been thrown on the murder of a Socialist M.L.A., Mr. Avadh Saran Varma, and his companion Shri Siaram, at village Baddupur in Barabanki district of U.P., in the third week of October, 1955. According to the special representative of *The Statesman*, "Mr. Avadh Saran Varma was alive when he was tied up to a pole and taken away by the armed mob to a grove about two miles from the scene of the attack and burnt along with the body of Mr. Siaram, the other victim of the Baddupur murders, according to eye-witnesses." The description underlines the intensity of the hatred of the armed party, who were, in point of fact, local ex-zamindars, mostly belonging to the Kshatriya caste, who were not taking kindly to the activities of Shri Avadh Saran and Shri Siaram, who by caste were *kurmis*, traditionally the most efficient cultivators in U.P.'s countryside and, by and large, tenants and agricultural workers. They were attacked when they were addressing a peasant gathering in a village where the Kshatriya landlords regarded their sway and superiority as by God ordained, and could not countenance such 'unruly' demonstrations by their erstwhile tenants and 'inferiors.' Reporting on the Barabanki outrage, the special

*Reproduced from Village Panchayats in India, by H. D. Malaviya, pp. 707-715.

representative of the *Hindustan Times* said : "The traditional agrarian tension which often follows a sharply divided caste line, is being exploited by the parties, particularly in eastern districts, where pressure on land is extreme." And that, "Elections to Panchayats have accentuated caste rivalry, and caste considerations have been a major consideration in selecting candidates."

The Barabanki violence is thus representative of the new situation in our countryside. And what exactly is the essence of this situation? Simply this, that the high caste authoritarianism of yore can no more work. The implementation of land reforms in particular, and the awakening of the Indian people in post-independence India in general, have created those conditions when the old hierarchical type of village structure, divided horizontally between a relatively small number of families at the top and a descending range of dependents—the poor petty tenants and agricultural labourers—at the lower rungs, can no more persist. For the top ones too much is at stake, not only their old economic power but also hitherto unquestioned social privileges, the exercise of all political power residing in the villages, their pride of place, etc. Those at the lower rung, strengthened as they have been economically by the abolition of landlordism and conferment of tenancy rights, and aware as they increasingly are of the equal rights granted to them in Republican India, are no more prepared to slave for the high-caste authoritarian as in olden days.

THE NEW CO-RELATIONSHIP OF CLASS FORCES IN OUR COUNTRYSIDE

In point of fact, a new co-relationship of class forces is the new pattern in our villages. The landlords have been divested of their erstwhile privileges, but sufficient areas have been left to them for cultivation, and they now come into the category of substantial cultivators, the rich peasants so to say. In former days, the substantial tenant joined hands with the middling and the poor ones, as also the agricultural labourers, to fight against the excesses of the landlords, who, in the great majority of cases, were supported by the British regime—the judiciary, the police, and the hierarchy of revenue officials, from the District Collector down to the Kanungo and the village revenue records-keeper, who in most cases was a veritable villain. Now, in the new set-up of things, the ex-landlord turned into the substantial cultivator, as also the already existing substantial cultivator, both of whom, as coincidence would have it, generally hail from the so-called upper castes, have a common front against the middling and poor cultivators and the agricultural labourers, who generally belong to the so-called lower castes. These latter, however, have and are having as much right over the lands they cultivate as the substantial cultivators, their erstwhile superiors and masters, and are no more prepared to be ordered about, suppressed and treated in the old way.

We have come across a profound observation on this new situation in our villages by Shri Tarlok Singh, Joint Secretary of the National Planning Commission, and a great student of our village affairs by his right. Says Shri Tarlok Singh: "Recent land reforms have tended to reduce inequalities in the ownership of land, but not sufficiently. The old leadership in the village has been losing its position and influence without substantial signs of a new leadership stepping into its place. The institution of caste has less of its social incidence, but it may well be that the economic incidence of castes, being due to lack of independent means of production and lack of alternative opportunity, is being accentuated, especially for the scheduled castes and other backward classes. There appear to be signs of increase in the productivity of land, but scarcely enough to make a large difference to the problems of rural poverty. The economy as a whole has gone forward, but the gap between population and production has not yet noticeably narrowed.

"In this situation, conflicts of interest within the village community have sharpened and the process continues. There are now few values which can be said to be common to the whole community, and certainly there is no common purpose which inspires all the sections equally. Many innovations benefit some, hurt others. As instances, one may cite the landlord's tractor and the electric connection which provides energy to the village entrepreneur's rice and flour mill. Progress and enterprise on the part of some proceed alongside growing poverty for others. The community as such seems to exert little influence on either trend."

These rampant and dormant conflicts in the villages have their full play in the Village Panchayats, in their elections as also in their functioning. We have before us a very large number of newspaper clippings from the daily and the weekly Hindi press of the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, etc. We will cite a few of these to illustrate the widespread nature of the conflict.

CONFLICTS IN UTTAR PRADESH PANCHAYATS

On March 14, 1954, while the Adalati Panchayat of village Chabli in Agra District was in session, the Panches quarrelled among themselves which culminated in a free *lathi* fight and breaking of heads. The Sarpanch of village Amarapur in Jhansi district was seriously assaulted with *lathis* on August 26, 1954, by some unknown persons as he was proceeding to another village and was admitted to the Civil Hospital in grave condition. Ulfat and Muloo, two kisans of Nagla Sheopur village in the Kampil police circle of Farrukhabad district in U.P., were shot dead by some unknown persons on June 9, 1955, while they were asleep on a *chabootra* in front of their house. Karan, who

also sustained gunshot wounds, later succumbed to his injuries in hospital and another man lay in a precarious condition. The three deceased were related to each other and "the cause of the murder is said to be some old enmity over the possession of a plot of land." *Navjeevan*, an esteemed Hindi daily of Lucknow, reported in its issue of 19-6-'55 of the high-handedness and terrorism of ex-zamindars of Faizabad district. "An ex-landlord of Tanda tehsil got the hereditary lands of kisans cultivated by force in villages Hirapur, Jallapur and Sabukpur, with the help of *goondas* and the police." Further, on June 12, 1955, the ex-zamindars attacked with *lathis* a peasant meeting in village Abhari in Faizabad tehsil resulting in injuries to many kisans and kisan leaders. This attack took place even when the police was standing by. A day earlier, on June 11, Sarju Singh, a kisan worker was seriously assaulted by 25 *goondas* as he was proceeding from village Nandlal-Ka-Pura to Chaubepur, and was admitted in a serious condition to the hospital. Again, on December 6, 1955, an agrarian riot took place in village Hakimpur, 28 miles from Allahabad, in which the President and the Vice-President of the Goan Sabha and a woman working in the field were killed. "The riot was the culmination of long-standing enmity between two groups of villagers. Recently allegations of theft and dacoity were made against one of the groups, about 76 members of which formed a riotous gang. They are alleged to have carried *lathis* and spears and made reckless attacks on members of the other group, killing 3 persons and injuring 25 others. They also looted, it is further alleged, about a dozen houses and took away clothes and ornaments."

VILLAGE CONFLICTS IN BIHAR

Let us now turn to Bihar. *Aryavarta*, a Hindi daily of Patna, wrote editorially on April 27, 1955: "Many Gram Panchayats are working ideally and we can have great expectations of them in future, but the same cannot be said of all Gram Panchayats. The establishment of many Gram Panchayats has resulted in worsening the conditions in the village because the race to occupy influential positions in the Gram Panchayats has intensified village factions and quarrels." The paper then goes on to cite certain examples. Bihar, indeed, has traditionally been an area of agrarian tension and the village conflicts there have probably been more tense than elsewhere. According to a report, a *Pasi* of village Dhankaul in Pupri Police Station of Sitamarhi district was beheaded on July 27, 1954, following a dispute about possession. The Bihar papers also report of illegal acts of Panchayat officials and their punishment. Thus, the Panchayat officials of village Bhabanichak in Jehanabad sub-division of district Gaya conspired to get an innocent man hauled up for dacoity, and the Sub-Divisional Officer came to his rescue. According to a report from Daltonganj, the D.S.P. of Palamau district arrested an official and a member of Singasiya Gram Panchayat for involvement in a dacoity. Again, on

a written complaint being filed against a village *Mukhiya* of Police Station Nangachia for taking bribes ranging from Rs. 3 to Rs. 10 from flood-affected people in exchange for extending to them flood-relief the Sub-Divisional Officer ordered an enquiry. On May 23, 1955, one Ramavatar Jayaswal filed a complaint in the court of S.D.O. of Sadar sub-division of district Purnea, against the *Mukhiya* of Barahara Gram Panchayat for beating. The complainant supported the rival of the *Mukhiya* in the Panchayat elections. According to a report from Simmultala, district Monghyr, dated August, 5, 1955, S.D.O. Jamui launched a case against a P.S.P. worker Shri Krishna Singh for assaulting the *Mukhiya* of Simmultala Gram Panchayat. The accused's party candidate was defeated in the Panchayat elections. According to another report, there was free fight in Gram Panchayat elections in villages Baro and Khaira of Nawadah sub-division in June 1955, resulting in injuries, to about two dozen people, two seriously. According to a message from Rajgir, dated November 10, 1955, one Abdul Ghafoor, *Mukhiya* of Bhui Gram Panchayat was sentenced to a term of $1\frac{1}{2}$ years for illegally registering a plot of land belonging to one Binda Upadhyaya in the name of his brother-in-law Najamuddin. There are many other reports of conflicts and fights in Panchayat elections.

According to a message from Chapra, dated June 11, 1955, the upper caste villagers of village Pabheja suddenly attacked the Harijans of the village. The reason was that the Harijans were being stopped from going to public places, which they resisted. Again, on April 24, 1955, members of Islampur Gram Panchayat, and Mohanchak Gram Panchayat had a free fight over a dispute regarding fishing rights in a tank. Eight persons were injured.

More serious, however, have been the disputes between the tenants and the ex-landlords or the *Kayami Pattadars* of the abolished Permanent Settlement. We have referred in the Bihar Chapter (Book II) of the murders in Purnea district. Again, according to P.T.I. message from Muzaffarpur, dated August 25, 1955, the police opened fire in Madhipur Hazari village in the district, killing two men, when a crowd attacked them with spears. The police, it is stated, was trying to stop forcible harvesting of jute from land which was under dispute. According to a report from Nawadah, dated January 12, 1956, about 200 agricultural workers left their houses in village Goethadih after a clash between them and farmers over payment of wages. They were living in an open field outside the village, and a police force was rushed. This clash was the second of its kind in the village in the course of a month. According to Shri Keshav Ram, Secretary, Nawadah Backward Classes League, the cause of the trouble was the refusal

of the cultivators to pay their agricultural labourers at the prescribed Government rates. He also alleged that some local leaders were preaching casteism and apprehended that this might worsen the situation.

Indeed, the story of village conflicts in Bihar can be endless and we would rather stop. The expropriated landholders are in no mood to take things lying down, and even Acharya Vinoba Bhave, during his Bihar Bhoodan tour, complained against them. Thus, addressing a prayer meeting at village Hansa near Samastipur in August 1954, Vinoba said that he was grieved to hear that "some zamindars were harassing Bhoodan workers interested in stopping eviction and even dubbing some of them as Communists."

IN RAJASTHAN

Almost an identical picture is seen in Rajasthan. The former Jagirdars and others with vested interests in land are doing their best to remain supreme in the villages and did their best to capture Village Panchayats in the elections last year. The Rajasthan dailies and weeklies (in Hindi), quite numerous and well-edited, abound in stories of excesses of ex-jagirdars, and their high-handedness in Panchayats captured by them. According to the weekly *Marwar Sandesh*, (dated 25-8-'55), Jagirdar Abhay Singh of district Pali forcibly took away lands from long-standing tenants and converted them into his farm. All efforts made by the peasants to get redress from high authorities are defeated by the jagirdar. Village folks who tend to sympathise with the ejected peasants are threatened with murder and other dire consequences. Such stories can be multiplied. According to another message, on being defeated in Panchayat elections, the jagirdars committed a most heinous crime in Khavaspura village of Jodhpur district. To avenge their defeat, the jagirdars cut the nose and ears of Shri Sukhdeo, the President of Khavaspura Village Congress Committee and of Shri Bacharam, an elected Panch, and also extracted an eye of one of them. Another esteemed daily of Rajasthan has reported widespread efforts of former feudal landowners to act high-handedly and illegally in Panchayat elections and capture them. The incidents, into the details of which we need not go, relate to villages Panditjee-Ki-Gharni, Purala, Bairoo, Keroo, Banar, Gangano, Lorari, Nevra, Cherai, Bhikamkaur, etc., in Marwar (Jodhpur). Says the correspondent: "In the Marwar Panchayat elections democratic principles are being murdered in broad day-light. . . The feudal elements are doing their level best to save their fast-ending existence. At some places casteism is the medium for generating various evils. This effort to save their existence is proving a great obstruction in the development of healthy democracy." A correspondent of the same paper re-

ported from Danta Ramgarh that in the forthcoming elections to Panchayats in villages Roopgarh and Khatu, a big conflict is expected between the Jagirdars and the peasants. These conflicts apparently continue in some form or other. For example, the body of the Up-Sarpanch of Shivrati Gram Panchayat in Bhilwara district, who had been a prominent social worker for the past 15 years, was found buried in a *nala*. He had been kidnapped 5 days before.

IN VINDHYA PRADESH

Elections to Vindhya Pradesh Panchayats towards the end of 1954 also revealed similar activities on the part of the divested owners. *Vindhya Panchayat*, a reputed weekly of State, devoted exclusively to Panchayat affairs, in its editorial of November 7, 1954, said: "Lots of complaints are pouring about the elections to the newly constituted Panchayats. Many illegal activities are going on and the officials must give attention to them. We accept that our village brethren are not as well aware of the processes of the law as they should be. This ignorance of the peasants is being fully exploited by the reactionary elements. Besides, the Jagirdars, *mahajans*, the *pavaidars* and *mukhiyas*, who had hitherto been dominant in village life, are not lagging behind in their scheming and cunningness. The masses should not allow such people to interfere in their activities and should elect the best people to Panchayats."

We have before us the files of *Vindhya Panchayat* and another leading weekly of the State, *Bhaskar*, also published from Rewa. While they contain commendable records of Panchayat work, they also abound in reports of unfair dealings in Panchayats, of no-confidence motions against Sarpanches, of factionalism in Panchayats, of interference in Panchayat work by village *Mukhiyas*, of wrong accounting of Panchayat funds, etc.

RURAL CONFLICTS—INVOLVED AND COMPLICATED

Compared to these States, the Panchayats in Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh have had a comparatively smooth functioning. We have not been able to peruse the local press of other States. The general pattern, however, is clear enough. In our countryside today live members of different groups with varying interests which conflict with one another. It is hardly a matter of belief or theory. It is a reality we see before our eyes. This conflict is visible in the hundreds of events taking place in the villages everyday. Panchayats have become the centres of these conflicts because they have become by far the most potent forum for the villagers, who had hitherto been

denied all avenues of self-expression. In other words, the new co-relationship of class forces in the rural India of today expresses itself in the Panchayats, which apparently seem to have become the centres of these conflicts. This conflict of diverse interests in the countryside is, however, not very sharp and clear-cut as, for example, the disputes that arise in industrial centres between the capitalists and the workers. The rural conflict is a highly involved and complicated affair. The broad lines indicated above may generally be true, but then it is not always essential for caste and property differences to be coincident in all cases of rural conflict. A host of other factors, old ties and loyalties, localism and parochialism—all intermingle and intertwine to produce a complex picture, to which the degeneration of the Indian as a man during more than a century of foreign rule, the narrowness of approach, the greed and jealousy, blind self-interest and all similar evil traits make a profound contribution.

SECTION VII OBSTACLES IN RURAL REORGANISATION

I

VILLAGE CO-OPERATIVES—AN ANALYSIS
OF THEIR FAILURE*

In considering the record of the co-operative credit movement in the Indian village, it has accordingly to be remembered that in India, as wholly distinguished from other countries, there has been the unique *combination* of the following features : (1) a socio-economic structure largely based on caste within the village itself, (2) the linking up of the upper parts of that structure to a cash economy and an administration centralized in the urban sector, and (3) the fact that the linking up took place as the outcome of three processes which historically happened to operate *together* in India, viz., colonial rule and administration, commercialization of agriculture and urbanization of industry.

In the sum total of the attitudes and environment, psychological, sociological and other, of co-operative societies, central co-operative banks, apex co-operative institutions, commercial banks, insurance companies and the Central Bank of the country, consists the climate of institutional credit; that climate in Indian conditions has been

*Reproduced from : "The General Report of the Committee of Direction of the All-India Rural Credit Survey—Volume II." pp. 272-279.

preponderantly 'urban'; it is not yet congenial to rural interests and the fulfilment of rural needs. It is in this climate that the rural producer is expected, by and large, both by co-operative theory and governmental policy, to combine with other rural producers, form co-operative associations at the village level and through them conduct his 'business' in so far as it concerns credit. He is expected to do this without financial assistance of a significant order from the State, but with a great deal of administrative advice and guidance from it. Having formed an association, he is left to face the powerful competition of private credit, private trade (often private moneylending cum-trade) and private organisation of industry, all of them deriving strength and support from the urban apex—whether of commercial banking and finance or of export or wholesale trade. In the same context, the rural producer is expected to organize himself co-operatively for the promotion of the processing, marketing, etc., of his harvest. Added to all this is the cleavage of interests in the village itself, with the bigger landlord, the village moneylender, the village trader, etc., on one side and the medium and small cultivator on the other. Village leadership, vesting as it does in the former, usually operates partly for the advantage of the more powerful economic interests and partly in alignment with the social institution of caste; and village leadership thus constituted and biased makes itself felt in every institution in the village including, of course, the co-operative society itself. In this combination resides the basic reason for the failure of the co-operative efforts at 'better business' in its two-fold aspect of better co-operative credit and better co-operative economic activity.

The conclusion that the primary co-operative society had taken root in this country was premature then, and would perhaps be still premature now nearly forty years after the report of the MacLagan Committee. Indeed, it might not be wholly impermissible to detect a certain degree of truth in a description we have come across of Co-operation in this country as 'a plant held in position with both hands by Government since its roots refuse to enter the soil.' More than the roots of Co-operation, it is the tentacles of private economy that have acquired grip in rural India.

The not-so-strong can combine co-operatively and get the same advantages as the strong. But the very weak are not in the same position as the not-so-strong; certainly not if the strong have, in addition, a whole reservoir of institutional strength from which they can add immeasurably to their own. This disproportion provides a key to the wholly different records of co-operative credit in the West and in India; for, Co-operation can succeed only if, between the forces of Co-operation on the one hand and the opposing forces of private credit and private trade on the other, the disparity that ever tends to be present does not exceed certain reasonable bounds. In India, not only has there been too wide a disparity between the internal

strength of the co-operative structure and the external forces pitched against it in competition; these latter have in many insidious ways entered into and vitiated the internal cohesion of co-operative bodies themselves. No more than an outline of how this has happened is attempted in this chapter.

The failure of co-operative credit is explicable in terms of the total impracticability of any attempt to combine the very weak in competition with the very strong and expect them by themselves to create conditions, firstly for their emancipation from the interests which oppose them, and secondly for their social and economic development in the context of the severe disadvantages historically imposed on them by a structure of the type described. The problem is not so much one of re-organisation of co-operative credit as of the creation of new conditions in which it can operate effectively and for the benefit of the weaker. The prevailing conditions cannot be transformed by the very persons who are oppressed and rendered weak by their existence. The forces of transformation have to be at least as powerful as those which are sought to be counteracted. Such forces can be generated not by Co-operation alone but by Co-operation in conjunction with the State.

II

DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING COTTAGE INDUSTRIES*

Taking up first those difficulties which are special to cottage industries, as distinguished from agriculture, three main items are obvious:

(1) Cottage industries have to face the competition of larger, better organized and technically much more competent units in the shape of the manufacturing industries situated in towns and cities.

(2) The market for cottage industries is much less assured than for the agricultural industry. Fortunately for the latter, food is firstly wanted by all, and secondly is still grown on land and not in factories. For cottage industries, on the other hand, the essence of the problem is to find a market and then not lose it to a more powerful urban competitor.

(3) The other important special problem for many cottage industries is the finding of the raw material. Thus, one of the greatest difficulties of the handloom industry, except perhaps in periods of control, has been that of the purchase of yarn. A number of weavers' co-operative societies, it is interesting to note, are little more than societies for buying yarn and distributing it among their members.

Apart from these items, all of them grave and all of them important, the nature of the difficulties seems essentially the same for cottage industries as for agriculture when looked at from the point of view of the reorganization and rehabilitation of the industry on a co-operative basis. The main and still largely unsolved problem for co-operative cottage industry is, we suggest, the same that has been faced by co-operative agriculture, namely, how to make a combination of the very weak strong enough in relation to the much stronger. Just as there is the moneylender in the sphere of agricultural credit, so there is the *karkhanadar* for each important cottage industry, with the difference that he combines in himself the handicraftsman and the financier. The *karkhanadar* is himself part of a wider system of private finance. Thus a whole set of private creditors, financing

*Reproduced from: "The General Report of the Committee of Direction of the All-India Rural Credit Survey—Volume II." pp. 507-508.

agencies, marketing agencies, etc., deal with the individual small weaver, as do the private traders and private financiers with the cultivator. We would, in this connection, quote from a note which appears in the First Annual Report (1954) of the All-India Handloom Board.

"Since, according to the Fact Finding Committee's Report, the unorganised condition of the industry is responsible for its abnormal high marketing costs and its consequent evils, it is but natural to accord pride of place to the organisation of the industry in all schemes aiming at the stabilization of the ancient industry and thereby ensuring the prosperity of the weavers." According to the Fact Finding Committee, the official agencies have fostered only co-operative organisations which have, speaking generally, suffered from financial weakness, inefficiency of management and inability to cope with fluctuation in yarn prices and with marketing of the finished product. The Committee has also emphasised the age-long social and business relations and, in most cases, ties of caste and creed between the master-weavers, sowcars and mahajans, on the one hand and the weavers on the other, which may have been primarily responsible for the half-hearted support accorded to the co-operative movement. It is also possible that the lack of credit facilities on social occasions such as marriages, pujahs, absence of any effective voice in the management of co-operative organisation and the smallness of the capital invested by him in the society did not evoke the enthusiasm of the weaver who preferred to eke out an existence as best as he could with the aid and support of the master-weaver or the sowcar mahajan. It is also not unlikely that co-operative organizations invited within their fold only the weavers and thus alienated the sympathy of the master-weavers and the mahajans."

"The next question of importance is the question of marketing. In so far as the independent weavers are concerned, they form the smaller proportion of the weaver population in the country; no tangible relief could be possible unless they join either the co-operative or any other organization which may be fostered. Their slender finances, chronic indebtedness and, therefore, complete dependence on the yarn dealer for the supply of yarn on credit leave them no option other than that of selling at the buyer's price. Unless, therefore, they are brought within the fold of such organisation as would supply them yarn on credit and take back the finished product at prices based on standard wages and replacement cost of yarn, they would in due course of time be relegated to the position of mere wage-earners.

"...The numerous types of middlemen and the functions of each has been dealt with fully by the Fact Finding Committee in

paragraphs 60 to 63 of its Report, and the Committee has discussed the middlemen's profit in paragraph 124. The Committee has also come to the conclusion that 'there are far too many middlemen participating in the trade and that their efficiency and individual turnover are much lower than they should be. At the same time, there are many middlemen who appear to be keeping their heads above water by taking a proportionately higher share of the gross profits of the industry than the weaver himself.' The Committee has emphasised that the cost of marketing of handloom fabrics is 'prohibitively high and that the middleman is largely to be blamed for this.' 'The principal problem, therefore, so far as marketing is concerned, is how to reduce the marketing costs.'

III

PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATION*

(a) *Village Leadership and Administration*

It is not only the urban-induced power of the private moneylender and the private trader that affects the success of co-operatives when it manifests itself either inside or outside the society. Affinity is not confined to these two ; it extends to the leadership in the village whether this is based on property or derived from connection with the administration. The bigger landlord has ways which conform with those of the moneylender, and indeed, as we have said, he is often the moneylender or trader himself. The village headman is also drawn from the same class, and it is usual for these to have connections which link them not only to the sources of finance but to the seats of administrative power. Subordinate officials, revenue and other—including those of the relatively low-paid co-operative department—have often no alternative but to stay with these village leaders and be dependent on them for ordinary amenities when they visit the village or camp in it for a few days. In this and other ways is initiated a process of association with those who wield power and influence in the village and who for that reason have their own uses as the local instruments of an administration which resides in towns and cities and which in varying degrees is inaccessible to the ordinary villager. This close conformity of association and interests between the subordinate officials of Government and the more powerful elements in the village is a matter to be borne in mind as of great significance in explaining the failure of implementation of the policies and directives, co-operative or other, emanating from the higher levels of the administration. Sometimes, temporarily overawed by superior official authority or enthused by missionary-minded officers, an important measure of co-operative policy, for example, may in fact be translated into practice in the village ; but it is not often that the effect is lasting ; frequently, the directions merely remain on paper, especially where they involve some disadvantage to the more powerful in the village. Acting in concert with these, the subordinate official, whose functions take him to the village, creates for the benefit of the superior officers what might be called the illusion of implementation woven round the reality of non-compliance. Several factors in the village help to create this effect, not least among them the powerful influence

*Reproduced from : "The General Report of the Committee of Direction of the All-India Rural Credit Survey—Volume II." (a) 277-278 ; and (b) 525-528.

of caste. If the leader is of a particular caste, it is unusual for others of the same caste in the village to report to superior authority that things are otherwise than as reported by the leader and the subordinate official. This marked tendency towards the promotion of an impression of change around changelessness, of active obedience to behests around stolid resistance to instructions, which only the most persistent and detailed supervision from above can check, has always to be taken into account in assessing the worth of reports that the policies of Government have been put into operation in the village. The consideration is one which must qualify both satisfaction and belief when it is found stated, for example, of a particular area, that tenancy laws have been enforced, or that moneylenders are not operating without due authorization, or that co-operative societies are actively functioning from year to year. The *status quo* and the non-compliance are often achieved conjointly and at great effort by the leading elements in the village and the subordinate agencies of Government. The balance attained may be the result of some completely new alignment of forces, of some new distribution of perquisites or of some new passing of 'consideration.' The persons who suffer in this process are the weaker and disadvantaged elements of the village for whose benefit the directives and policies are conceived. Among the combinations of factors which thus operate against the interests of the bulk of those who reside in the village is the rigidity of caste feeling in conjunction with the power derived from money, land, leadership, and above all, the affiliation with the superior forces of urban economy. The rigidity of caste loyalty remains, while the original division of caste functions no longer does. The result is that the landlord who may also be moneylender, the moneylender who may also be trader and the educated person who may also be subordinate official, all these through their association with the outside urban world of finance and power wield an influence in the village which at many points is diverted from the good of the village to the benefit of the caste or even of a close circle of relatives.

(b) *Problems of Quality of Administration*

Besides Planning, an important aspect of the larger context with which we are concerned, by reason of the bearing which it has on our recommendations, is Administration. We have elsewhere made various suggestions which come under this head : organisation of training, strengthening of co-operative departments, formation of new cadres, etc. From the standpoint of a programme such as is here envisaged, the re-organisation required in respect of the co-operative departments alone will be considerable. But the administrative problem in the larger context, in so far as it has relevance to co-ordinated programmes of national development of which this may be regarded as a part, is much wider than re-organization of co-operative departments or the training of the personnel of those and other de-

partments and institutions. The particular items to which we propose to confine our brief remarks in this chapter are : (1) the selection and training of the personnel concerned with such programmes ; (2) the effectiveness of implementation as ensured by supervision ; and (3) the wider question of reorganization at different levels in the context of development.

As we have already emphasised, not only the training but also the recruitment of the personnel will have to be looked at from the point of view of the new functions. Thus, a capacity for sympathy, understanding and responsiveness, in the sense in which we have used those terms in relation to the rural environment and to the needs of different rural classes, should be among the qualities to which importance should be attached in recruiting new candidates. For, unless that capacity is initially present and is fostered and encouraged at all stages, the warning would be relevant that "to exchange the landlord for the tax-gatherer, the merchant for the agent of State monopolies and the moneylender for the state bank official, may prove to be not progress but enslavement."

To the extent that official attitudes are rigid, unresponsive and unimaginative, they will stultify the progress in every one of the directions envisaged. In particular, they will be fatal to the objective of evolving State-partnered co-operative institutions, especially at the rural level, into fully co-operative institutions at the earliest possible stage. Moreover, it is here that the administrator and the official will be called upon to discharge the extremely difficult task of helping others to help themselves : in other words, while doing important work as an officer of Government, yet so to perform it as to make himself dispensable within the shortest possible time.

HONESTY AND EFFICIENCY

Besides sympathy and informed responsiveness, two important requirements are obviously honesty and efficiency. On the latter it is needless to dwell. There is evident in India today a sad lack of honesty in different degrees and at different levels of administration and governance. In a programme for the positive economic benefit of the weaker, in conditions in which certain sections of the rich and the powerful will ever be interested in the failure of the programme—both broadly and in the detail of its effect on themselves in so far as it is their position of vantage and their power of competition that will be sought to be weakened—it is more than ordinarily necessary that the strictest honesty should be enforced and dishonesty punished. The fact has to be faced that the sociological soil of India today is more favourable to corruption and oppression than to co-operation and planning. Corruption has its roots not only in men's characters but also, and from the point of view of social remedy more relevantly and

more deeply, in men's institutions. In India at present, the largest single factor institutionally responsible for corruption may be said to be the lack of egalitarianism where this lack is most basically present, viz., in the Indian village. For, corruption is the exchange of some form of favour against the public interest for some form of satisfaction of private interest. The latter is offered by the man who wants the favour. But favour against the public interest implies that someone else is disadvantaged, viz., the man who cannot offer the satisfaction. This is the weak man. The greater the degree and extent of inequality between strong and weak, rich and poor, the greater the reason and the larger the occasion to seek favours. Perfect egalitarianism, if that were possible, might almost be said to be a perfect safeguard against corruption. These considerations make it all the more important to demand the highest standards of honesty not only of those concerned with the implementation of programmes of development, but also of those in public life, administrative and political, generally.

On the need for ensuring by efficient supervision that there has been actual implementation, we would observe that there are two big illusions in India which too often take away people's thoughts, often involuntarily, from the realities of action and effect. These are the, legislative and administrative illusions. Legislation says, 'This shall be done', and after such interval as may be dictated by propriety, expediency or sometimes sheer inefficiency, Administration answers back, 'That has been done.' While Legislation and Administration thus proceed from one exchange to another, the old realities often continue their former sway. In the context of development the failure to translate into administrative reality what has been laid down as governmental policy would vitiate all programmes except on paper. The utmost importance should therefore be attached and the strictest standards of efficiency enforced in the execution of policy, and in the supervision of execution, at all levels.

RURAL NEEDS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Many schemes and many suggestions for the re-organisation of the administrative set-up in order that the needs of independent India may be more effectively served are before the Government of the day. As in the reform of co-operative administration, so in that of general administration, especially in relation to the function of development, the main focus should be the village. It is necessary to emphasise this because, despite the welcome tendency to design certain important new measures of administration—such as National Extension—with the village in mind and round the village as centre, this requirement, which is basic to India's further development at this stage, is often lost sight of in the more comprehensive schemes of re-organisation. One sometimes comes across individual 'co-operators' who appear

to think that co-operative re-organisation and development are best fostered by ensuring for its premier non-official bodies a continuity of political contacts at Delhi and a variety of international contacts at Geneva. But much greater than its need to go to the capitals of the world for guidance is the need of Indian Co-operation to make, at long last, an effort to go to the Indian village for study and reflection and for genuine attempts to develop and reorganize. So too, for Indian administration as a whole, a vast field of research and action remains to be covered in the villages of the country. On lessons derived from rural India, rather than on those learnt from the unrelated experience of foreign, industrially more advanced and—in the socio-economic and political aspects—radically different countries, will have to be based both the assessment of administrative needs and the modification of structure to meet those needs. In the administrative structure itself are present two interrelated but not always co-ordinated aspects : the new and growing aspect of development and the old and 'basic' aspect of normal administration. The main task before the country being the bringing about of economic development in terms of simultaneous progress towards social egalitarianism, the prior function of the administrative structure as a whole—including the basic—may be said to be the promotion of conditions in which such development and progress will be possible. The indigenous situation, then, by which must be dictated all plans of administrative re-organization, is wholly dissimilar to that, for example, of countries whose administration is geared to the free play of political and economic forces.

Considering the problem of administrative reform in the extended light of the analysis and proposals contained in this Report, the most important needs may be said to be these. There is first of all the need for Government to make its administrative role in the village more and more that of a beneficent authority and less and less that of the tax-gatherer which, for the most part, it has been till recently. Secondly, again in the village, there is the need for Government to assume the function of real partnership in economic development—especially of the middle and lower groups—and not merely that of administration on the one hand or of advice and 'extension' on the other. Thirdly, there is the need not only to simplify development administration at the village end, as in National Extension Service, but also to achieve effective co-ordination between (i) the different administrative agencies of development, including that of Local Self-Government and (ii) those agencies and the machinery of basic administration. A large field remains to be explored in connection with the more effective association of the local bodies of administration—*panchayats*, local boards, etc.—with local projects of planned development, e.g., those relating to minor irrigation, no less than roads, public health or primary education.

IV

INAPPROPRIATE VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS*

(a) INAPPROPRIATE EXTANT INSTITUTION

An extremely important aspect of such an approach, in so far as the cultivator is concerned, is obviously the creation of an organization within the village which can be entrusted with the programme of production and other economic activities designed for the village as part of the bigger programme in the agricultural sector of the Plan. The search for such an organization may be said to be one of the main preoccupations of the Planning Commission. The position reached may be illustrated by the following extracts. These paragraphs appear in the People's Edition of the *First Five Year Plan (1953)*:

"It is greatly to be desired that in the agricultural part of the Plan, the village as a whole should be actively associated in fixing targets and working for their achievement. In recent years the State Governments have shown a welcome earnestness in establishing *panchayats* as civic bodies charged with general responsibility for the collective welfare of the village community. Many activities, such as framing programmes for production, obtaining and managing governmental grants for building roads, tanks, etc., introducing improvements in agricultural methods, organizing voluntary labour for community works and assisting in the implementation of legislation for economic and social reform, will fall within the purview of the *panchayat*.

"On the other hand, for the working of individual programmes of development, where the specific responsibility and liability of a member have to be ensured, a more binding form of association is necessary. Specific and practical tasks of reclaiming land, providing resources for better cultivation and for marketing the village produce are best performed through co-operatives. It is, however, very necessary that co-operative agencies in the village should have the closest possible relationship with the *panchayat*. Though in the discharge of their functions the two bodies have specific fields in which to operate, by having mutual representation and by common *ad hoc* committees for

*Reproduced from : "The General Report of the Committee of Direction of the All-India Rural Credit Survey—Volume II." (a) pp. 521-523 ; (b) 520 ; (c) 524-525.

certain matters, it will be possible to build up a structure of democratic management through both the organisations."

'Village production councils' were the device thought of at an earlier stage as mentioned in the following quotation from the *Report of the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee, 1952* :

"There are also village institutions that can be set up where they do not exist. *Panchayats* can be established under laws in force in States. And for every village or group of villages, according to conditions, there should be a multi-purpose co-operative society for providing credit and supplies and giving other assistance needed by farmers including marketing. Close working relations should also be established with schools which can become useful centres of social education. On the question whether village *panchayats* or management boards of multi-purpose societies should be recognised as agents for implementation of development plans, opinion is divided. Some State favour the former and some the latter. There is also the Planning Commission's suggestion for village production councils. Each area should decide this on its own special needs and conditions. But it is worth emphasising again that no solution can be found to the problem of rural betterment unless local co-operation is secured to the maximum possible extent and the support of the best leadership is enlisted."

"The Progress of the Plan (January 1954) contains the following passages which seem to indicate that village *panchayats* where possible, and *ad hoc* committees otherwise, are now favoured as instruments of development within the village :

"In the planning and implementation of the programme in the Community Projects and National Extension Areas the maximum use is being made of local popular organisations like *Panchayats* and Union Boards. Wherever *Pachayats* or Union Boards, organised along traditional lines, are effective, they are always utilised. In some areas, success has been achieved by entrusting developmental activities to *ad hoc* non-statutory bodies. These organisations have various names. In Madhya Pradesh they are called Gram Vikash Mandals ; in Orissa, Gram Mangal Samities ; in Madras, Gram Seva Sanghams, and in West Bengal, Palli Unnayan Samities. Participation of the people in developmental activities organized by these bodies is helping in the development of village leadership."

"Village *panchayats* have, thus, a vital role to play in the sphere of land reform and it is urgently necessary to establish a network of *panchayats* all over the country-side."

The problem itself was originally thus stated in the *First Five Year Plan* (larger edition) in a passage in which the co-operative form of association, as a target if not an actuality, was considered to be the most desirable :

“According to their needs and experience, village communities will discover the arrangements which serve them best. There has to be a great deal of trial and experiment before patterns of organization which will best promote the interests of the rural population can be evolved. Nevertheless, it is important to work towards a concept of co-operative village management, so that the village may become a vital, progressive and largely self-governing base of the structure of national planning and the existing social and economic disparities resulting from property, caste and status may be obliterated.”

We have reproduced these extracts to illustrate the ineffectiveness of the search hitherto conducted for a body within the village which can assume responsibility for the execution of that part of the village plan which is concerned with agricultural production and development. If the analysis presented in this Report has some validity, the opinion may be hazarded that in most villages neither the *panchayat* nor an *ad hoc* committee would be an appropriate organization for being entrusted with this part of the task. Both these are likely to represent precisely those elements in the village which, by and large, operate against the interests of the middle and small cultivator. Here again, the more realistic approach seems to us to be to promote in the first instance those conditions which are necessary before such an organization can function successfully in the village in the context of better farm production and better farm business. For fulfilling this prior requirement, the effort on the part of the State, in the circumstances we have set out in detail, has to be a deliberate, concerted and nation-wide economic endeavour in combination, on a co-operative basis, with the weaker elements in the agricultural population itself. By and large, it is only State participation of this magnitude and direction that would constitute the needed approach. Into such an approach would then be fitted State activities such as National Extension and Community Project Development which, however important, cannot by themselves create conditions within the village which can be relied upon to retain their momentum after aid and supervision are withdrawn or reduced. The main task as recognized by the Plan is the generation within the village itself of forces which through their organic relation with village life and economy will continue to operate for the development and prosperity of the village. The creation of such forces by means which are not too costly in personnel and finance, which in other words can be adopted on a country-wide scale within a reasonable period, may be said to be the main problem of planning in relation to the important rural sector of the Plan.

(b) WANT OF ENTHUSIASM OF THE PEOPLE

To the socio-economic problem which to-day confronts the country, the approach has necessarily to be constructive and constitutional; and if only for this reason—there are others such as, for example, are pertinent to the Indian tradition—the approach of violence and class conflict and of ‘revolution’ in terms of these two, is of course *a priori* excluded from consideration, but the gigantic constructive effort which this imposes on the State as well as the people and their institutions is the reverse of inaction, *laissez-faire* and lack of concerted purpose. All the more is it necessary, in such a context, to devise positive institutional modes of approach which, among other goals, lead to the resolution of conflict and mitigation of caste and class disparity, and the promotion of new factors of unity across the older divisions.

In the village itself, nothing is so important in this context as to build up a new loyalty of production—of common economic effort in the widest sense—across the loyalties of caste and the disparities of riches, influence and economic privilege. If the cultivators of the village, medium and small included, owned, if need be along with the State, the rice mill to which the harvested paddy was taken, if they converted their sugar-cane into sugar in a factory which was co-operatively organised for them, if they were effectively served with both credit and marketing services by a rural co-operative society working in co-ordination with a co-operative marketing society at the erstwhile *mandi* and if in gradual process they combined to consolidate their holdings, or to organize a co-operative farm which reduced their expenses and increased their yield—in all these ways would be brought about a new sense of participating in common effort for the common benefit together with a new feeling of fellowship for those who shared the economic function, but not necessarily the caste, in common with themselves. In this new context, the association of the producer would not merely be with other producers, big or large, medium or small, but also with the State through their local representatives, i.e., the officials serving in the department or deputed to the society with whose guidance and alliance, together with the assistance of the finances made available by Government, the conditions and disparities of the older order could be made gradually to disappear. Only out of such association, socially and economically beneficent, with one another and with the State, would be born that enthusiasm for development which is recognized to be absent to-day in most villages in India despite large-scale efforts on the part of the Administration to improve the lot of the villager. This lack of enthusiasm may be illustrated from recent official experience. “In fact,” say the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee, with reference to that campaign, “the movement did not arouse nation-wide enthusiasm and did not become a mass movement for raising the level of village life.” “Measures

of reform," records the *Progress of the Plan* "have so far been enforced mainly through the revenue agency, but as the reforms take on a more radical character, it becomes more and more important that the people should be associated as fully as possible in their implementation. A new social and economic order cannot be built up without popular enthusiasm and the assistance of local leadership and initiative." The recognition of the planning authorities that, for the next phase of the Plan, the design of development should be 'from the village upwards' is itself evidence of the need to enlist the active interest of the villager in those measures for his economic benefit which today have failed to rouse him to whole-hearted participation. This want of enthusiasm is a measure not of the smallness of governmental effort but of the vastness of the socio-economic disparity which the villager senses to be the main fact which conditions his life and which the policies and programmes of Government are seen by him to have left entirely unaffected. If, as may be assumed, in the larger context of the other disadvantaged groups in town and village, the next Five Year Plan includes various programmes of economic amelioration, the same want of enthusiasm may be foreseen from these groups, if the same lack of effect is perceived by them to be inherent in the well-meaning and even costly efforts of the State conceived for the benefit of those very groups.

(c) INSOLUBLE PROBLEM IN PRESENT CONDITIONS

The programme of development outlined in this Report—the development of co-operative credit, of co-operative marketing, processing and other economic activity, and of rural banking in order to facilitate the other two types of development—is concerned with the two main classes of rural producer : with the cultivator mainly, and with the handicraftsman incidentally. In the context of future planning, it may be assumed that, for the first, there will be an even bigger programme of agricultural production ; and for the second, a large-scale programme for the development of cottage industries. For both, it may be further assumed that the next phase of the programme will be governed by the announced concept of planning upwards from the village. It is of the essence of such a concept that the new Plan will be no mere projection into the next five years of the many unfinished projects or continuing activities of the present Plan, but something else besides ; for, such a projection of the present Plan, followed by its cutting up into local sections, would not constitute each such section a 'plan upwards' from the particular locality, whether that locality be a village or a district. Mention has been made in the last chapter of the search for a suitable body inside the village which can take up and pursue a programme of agricultural development in which all the cultivators of the village can participate. This search for an appropriate village organization is symbolical of the wider effort to convert the present more or less super-imposed programme of economic improvement into something

more in the nature of an organic development from within the village itself. From what point or nucleus shall this body of villagers be built up : from non-existent co-operative society, notional production council, factious *panchayat* or, ignoring all these, from just an *ad hoc* committee in the village ? The problem has not been solved because it is largely insoluble in present conditions. The search, as already indicated, is for something which can only emerge if the conditions requisite for it are first created by a State-partnered programme which, among other things, includes important aspects of agricultural economic activity besides credit-facilities for that activity ; it will not materialize as the result of any mere programme for extension, supervision and administration. In the sphere of rural industry, the new Plan will come up, not only against a combination of all these obstacles, but in addition the fundamental difficulty of promoting and sustaining small units of production, which, in respect of most of the types of goods they produce, will be confronted with the competition of the much larger units of urban industry which are both better organised and, in their technical aspects, more advanced and progressive. It may be assumed that this effort will nevertheless be made and the needed lines of development formulated in the programme for the second five year period. About the supreme importance of such an effort there can be no doubt, for it will be directed towards the fulfilment of a vital requirement of both the unemployed and the under-employed in the rural area, whether cultivator, handicraftsman or labourer. Indeed, the accord of priority to rural industry over most forms of urban industry is already implicit in both Plan and Constitution. From the basic economic objective of increase of wealth, in conjunction with the basic egalitarian objective of reduction of disparity, it follows that, as between different forms of production of new wealth, those should in particular be encouraged and established which, in the very process or situation or production, tend to promote the distribution of the added wealth in the more needed directions, as distinguished from its further concentration at the relatively more saturated points. Such an approach, already implicit in the concepts and precepts of planning, if not in its practical expression, may be expected to be made explicit in the second Five Year Plan and substantially embodied in the new programmes it will lay down for the industrial, including agro-industrial, sector of rural production. We have throughout kept this important and inevitable, though still largely potential, development in view in designing the State-partnered credit structure, co-operative as well as commercial, of our recommendations. We have also, it may be recalled, as complementary to such a structure in the short-term sphere of credit, suggested the co-ordination of policies in respect of bodies such as the All-India Handloom Board, the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board, the state financial corporations, etc., for the provision of the facilities needed in the context of the block and working capital requirements of State-sponsored, and possibly State-partnered, rural industries.

SECTION VIII

**RURAL RECONSTRUCTION-
PATTERNS**

I

HISTORICAL SURVEY*

S. THIRUMALAI

The very first type was, therefore, that of a single handed effort to construct a Model Village as a demonstration centre for neighbouring villages. After a brilliant initial success, such type of work has always ended in dismal failure with the slackening of individual effort and the waning of enthusiasm. The cost was also prohibitive.

The second type of rural uplift is characterised by co-operative effort by enthusiasts to enlarge the area of work and enlist the services of different departmental experts in their welfare work in the villages. As this type of activity required intense staff work, inspection and supervision, success could be obtained only in areas comprising a definite number of villages where the co-operative movement had gained in strength.

The third type of rural reconstruction was found in the work of the village *panchayats* in the period when they functioned efficiently in

*Reproduced from Post-war Agricultural Problems and Policies in India, by S. Thirumalai, 1954, pp. 232-247.

certain parts of the country. The latest type is that of the Community Projects which have been modelled on the Extension Services in Agriculture of the U.S.A.

Stages and Methods of Reconstruction

There have been six main stages of rural uplift work in India determined by the purposes and scope of work in relation to the agency of service. The first stage was marked by exclusive official effort. The main purpose of the work was confined to the sphere of public health and hygiene. The officers-in-charge of Government departments gathered the peasants whenever an epidemic broke out in an area and explained to them the measures they should take to combat the menace.

These sporadic meetings were not effective in awakening the rural conscience. In the second stage, work under reconstruction was extended to cover better education, better sanitation, cheap litigation etc. The official agency of propaganda was strengthened, *ad hoc* officers being appointed to organise meetings. The methods of approach were made comparatively attractive and effective, through exhibits, posters, pamphlets and broad-sheets. The traditional institution of *panchayat* was encouraged and assisted to take up reconstruction work as then conceived. But still, the peasants were hardly touched by the propaganda machinery and little achievement could be recorded.

In the third stage when the village *panchayats* languished, reconstruction work consisted in reorganising the machinery rather than improving conditions in villages. The fourth stage was marked by an enthusiastic revival of a general effort to uplift and intensification of the propaganda machinery and methods. Special efforts were made to improve the attractions and multiply the exhibits. The mobile van equipped with radio, loudspeaker, gramophone records and sets of exhibits from development departments, such as Industries, Agriculture, Veterinary, Hygiene, Co-operative, Education and Public Health formed the chief vehicle of propaganda. Villages were selected for reconstruction work and on-the-spot demonstrations were shown on what intensive efforts can achieve. The model village of Gurgaon, Rahi, Moga, Martandam, Vadmalapuram, Partabgarh were the achievements of this stage. The degree of success in each centre depended upon the agency at work. The fifth stage has witnessed spectacular exhibitions on occasions of religious, or cultural festivals organised with greater precision and specialism. They have covered all aspects of reform in rural life, from agricultural improvements to physical culture, temperance, boy-scout camps, red cross displays, etc. In the sixth stage the concept of rural uplift has been widened and attempts have been made to bring into close contact the rural population by organising voluntary associations of landlords, tenants, labour-

ers etc. for the specific purpose of improvement in agriculture and corporate life.

In all these stages the chief limitation has been the absence of co-ordination of purposes and agencies at work. In recent times, there has been a widespread organisation of non-official social welfare agencies in the country. The States have also set up separate departments for comprehensive reorganisation of welfare work in villages. But still the structural organisation has not been found to be adequate for a readjustment of the problems under rural reconstruction. There has not been a comprehensive survey or handling of the rural problem as a whole.

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS

It is difficult to give quantitative data on the actual achievements in rural reconstruction in the country. However, an attempt is made to indicate the work done by some notable agencies by way of illustration.

Co-operative Schemes

The co-operatives have been utilised for reconstruction work in villages by almost every agency, official as well as non-official. But they have not been so far organised independently on a broad basis to serve as the single co-ordinating agency for purposes of rural development. Even the multipurpose societies which have been lately accepted as the model, have confined their activities to the economic needs of the village population, such as credit, supply, purchase and sale, distribution of controlled commodities etc. Rarely have they covered the social and cultural requirements of the members.

Within the co-operative movement special types of societies have been organised for purposes of social welfare such as Education Societies, Better Living Societies, Health Societies, Veterinary Aid Societies etc. These are found mostly in the Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab. Obviously their achievements must be small, due to the restricted scope of their functions.

Sarvodaya Schemes

The scheme of *Sarvodaya* is the embodiment of the principles on which the constructive programme of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, is based. The scheme is worked both by non-official agencies, particularly the organisations under the Congress Party as well as some of the State Governments as a humble tribute to the memory of the departed leader. The State of Bombay figures prominently in working the *Sarvodaya* schemes since 1948-49. The work is imple-

mented by trained and trusted social workers designated as '*sanchalaks*' at the village level and the organisation comprises the Central State *Sarvodaya* Committee and area *Sarvodaya* Committees at the top. The schemes include plans relating to Education, Agriculture, Cow Protection, Village Industries, Public Health, Sanitation, Social Amenities and Social Welfare. Usually each centre selects one central activity such as colonisation and agricultural improvements or cattle breeding or hand spinning or basic education from which other parts of the programme derive their impulse. Emphasis is laid on Co-operative principles and methods in organising *Sarvodaya* activities and on inculcating habits of self-help, mutual aid, toleration and thrift among the people.

From the principles, methods and achievements it can be inferred that the *Sarvodaya* Movement is a comparatively comprehensive effort in rural reconstruction. It attempts an integration with the co-operative organisations and non-official agencies in the sphere of rural reconstruction. The intimate association of the Movement with the name of Mahatma Gandhi and his work for the villages gives it a more popular appeal. The potentialities as an officially adapted movement by the States are yet to be evaluated.

The Firka Plan

Madras State has many pioneer schemes and achievements to its credit. But the *Firka* Development Plan as worked by the State since 1947, has provided another type of organisation for rural reconstruction. The scheme again derives its inspiration from the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Two significant features of this Plan which deserve special mention are the newly-orientated policy of viewing the welfare work programme from the community angle and the method by which villagers are taught, guided and encouraged to raise their standard of living and welfare. Government's role is mainly that of a catalytic agent. The scheme emphasises the perfect co-ordination of the work of departments like Agriculture, Industries, Irrigation, Veterinary etc. Under the general Plan the five main centres of work are : Agriculture and Village Industries ; Sanitation, Health and Housing, Village Education ; Village Organisation ; Village Culture. The *firkas* or regions selected for development work are placed under trained Rural Welfare Officers. The *Gram Sevaks* and social service volunteers provide the vital link in the implementation of the Plan. The advice of other constructive Institutions is also sought in training the workers.

The special achievement of the scheme is that the small grant of money by Government has acted effectively as a kind of tilting lever in obtaining a large measure of local contribution in money and in kind of labour. Some of the major achievements were in

providing rural water-supply schemes, completing works of urgent importance and encouraging cottage industries. The excellent work and the results of the Madras *Firka* Development Scheme have been appreciated by the Central Government and they are anxious to see that other States copy this scheme.

Departmental Agencies

Though the activities undertaken under rural reconstruction may vary in the different States, the scheme is almost similar in all the States. The organisational set-up, however, is not uniform.

The development work includes encouragement to small-scale industries, construction of roads, distribution of medicines, village sanitation, constitution of village *panchayats* and the running of night schools.

Community Development

The Community Projects recently initiated by the State are the result of the continuous emphasis that has been placed on Community Development in reconstructing agriculture. They are the beginnings of a bold venture to adapt advanced extension technique as conceived and applied in the West to local conditions and resources in the Indian Villages. They are the first centralised, extensive and co-ordinated plan for rural reconstruction, incorporated in the first National Five Year Plan of the country.

The genesis of the Community Development schemes in the post-war period should, however, be traced to the establishment of new villages and townships in the scheme for Refugee Rehabilitation, formulated after partition. Among these the pilot development project at Mahewa in the Etawah District of the U.P. has earned public admiration for the enthusiasm and achievement in rural improvement.

Community Projects

The integrated scheme of Community Projects initiated by the State in 1952 for the transformation of the social and economic life of the villages proposes the establishment of a network of extension workers throughout the country over a period of ten years. The Community Project Area is conceived as being divided into 3 Development Blocks, each consisting of about 100 villages and a population of about 60,000 to 70,000. The Development Block is, in turn, divided into groups of 5 villages each, each group being the field of operation for a village level worker. The initial programme has been

started with approximately 55 Projects. It covers an area of 26,950 square miles in 18,464 villages with a population of 15.19 millions. Agricultural production is the most urgent objective in the selection of the initial Projects. The criteria for selection of the Project Area or independent Development Block Area has been the existence of irrigation facilities or assured rainfall. Seven areas have been selected on the ground of their being inhabited predominantly by scheduled tribes. The main lines of activity in a Community Project is briefly divided into: Agriculture and related matters; Irrigation; Communications; Education; Health; Supplementary Employment; Housing; Training and Social Welfare; The organisational structure consists of the Central Committee (The Planning Commission), with an Administrator of the Community Projects, the Development Committee at the State level with a commissioner or a similar official as Secretary, at the District level, a Development Officer and at the Project level, an Executive Officer with 125 supervisors and village level workers. The essence of the programme is the ensuring of people's participation right from the start. The agency of the *Bharat Sevak Samaj* which has been inaugurated as the non-official counterpart of the Organisation is to become a major avenue for the mobilisation of voluntary effort on the part of the villagers. The contributions of the villagers may be in the form of voluntary labour or cash.

The estimated cost of a basic type of a rural Community Project is Rs. 6.5 million over a period of three years. The Central Committee has, however, decided that the Project should operate on a reduced total of Rs. 4.5 million. The cost is shared between the Centre and the State in the ratio of 75:25 in respect of non-recurring expenditure and 50:50 in respect of recurring expenditure. The entire expenditure of the development blocks is expected to be borne by the State at the end of three years. The Plan has provided for a little over Rs. 1000 million for Community Projects and Rural Development. The financing of the operations under the Community Projects Scheme has been made secure under the Indo-American Technical Co-operation Fund. The contribution of U.S.A. to the Fund is 50 million dollars and the Government of India has agreed to contribute an equal amount, making up a total of 100 million dollars or about Rs. 500 million. The amount will be expended on the supporting projects such as the acquisition and distribution of fertilisers, iron and steel, project for ground water irrigation, for distribution of soil fertility and fertiliser use, for malaria control and for training of village level workers. Mention must also be made of the grants made by the Ford Foundation, totalling Rs. 23,030,000, towards the furtherance of community development and extension work in the country. Under this grant, 15 pilot community development projects and 25 extension training centres have been established. It is too early yet to indicate the achievements made by the Community Projects.

Provision has been made in the Plan for a systematic evaluation of the programme, and the results of the evaluation should indicate the nature of adjustments in the future.

National Extension Service

Community development is the method and rural extension the agency through which the Plan seeks to initiate the programme of social and economic transformation. Extension work and community programme will run concurrently, the only difference being that the former, which is restricted in scope, will cover a wider region while the latter, aiming at all-round development, will concentrate on particular areas. A programme has been drawn up for 1,200 blocks covering 120,000 villages and nearly one-fourth of the population within the operation of the extension service.

Out of the 1,200 blocks, 700 comprising 70,000 villages and a population of about 46.2 million will receive intensive development under Community Programme, while 500 blocks covering 50,000 villages and a population of about 33 million will receive attention under National Extension Service.

Each N.E.S. Development block will have a small 'works' programme forming a nucleus of productive activities in respect of basic amenities. The N.E.S. programme has considerable potentialities for employment, both in the field of skilled and unskilled work. In the sphere of skilled work technical personnel numbering nearly 85,000 would be required in various categories, such as project executive officers, agricultural graduates, multipurpose village level workers, veterinary doctors, co-operative inspectors, school teachers, social education organisers, doctors, compounders, sanitary inspectors, health visitors, midwives, engineers, overseers, supervisors and mechanics.

II

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS*

—AN EVALUATION

Adult literacy centres were started during the project period in all but 2 of the Evaluation Centres. 38.6 per cent of the sample villages reported this programme, village coverage by blocks varying from 8 per cent to 93 per cent with 6 centres reporting village coverage of over 58 per cent. From the reports received from P.E.Os., however, it appears that there is general lack of interest on the part of villages in this programme ; and even when follow-up facilities are provided by way of rural libraries, the response is not enthusiastic. It has also been noticed that as soon as project grants cease, the literacy centres also tend to disappear. This lack of enthusiasm for literacy among adults constitutes a sharp contrast to their enthusiasm for primary education for their children and indicates some major deficiency either in the extension methods followed by social education officers or in the techniques adopted for imparting adult literacy.

As regards the benefits of the programme for the economically handicapped classes and the extent of the bridging of the distance between the better off and worse off sections of rural society, P.E.Os reports do not give room for optimism. It is true that some direct benefit has accrued to the handicapped classes by way of employment, drinking water wells, primary education, and rural housing. But these are not, with the exception of the last item and that too only in some areas, peculiar to the handicapped classes. Benefits of these programmes accrue also to the other classes in the villages. In addition, the better off classes get loans, are more easily able to adopt improved practices, and otherwise derive larger benefit from the development programmes. The non-owner classes have not got the status that possession of land alone can give them, land re-distribution still remains in the realm of thought and discussion. Land reforms in the direction of ceiling on holdings, giving of land to the landless labourers, and co-operative farming are all still to be achieved in most of the evaluation block areas. Persons who can use credit productively but do not have the assets that can make credit available are, generally speaking, handicapped by the absence of co-operative institutions lending supplies in kind and arranging for sales and recovery from sale proceeds. This system of what is called 'integrated finances' has been reported from one or two block areas, but is still in an incipient stage and in any

*Reproduced from Evaluation Report on working of Community Projects and N. E. S. Blocks Vol I. Government of India, April 1957; pp. 17-21.

case found only in limited areas. The result of all this is that while some people are undoubtedly benefiting from the development programme and improving their economic and social conditions, these usually belong to those sections in the village who were already somewhat better off than their fellow villagers. This is a matter of concern for the future of the community development programme.

Finally, it must be pointed out that while there is reported to be some improvement in the working of Block and District Advisory Committees, it still remains largely true of the block areas that enough use is not being made of these agencies either in planning the programme or in creating the necessary atmosphere for implementing it. Officials are still not quite educated in seeing the possibilities of the immense help they can derive for the promotion of public participation by paying appropriate attention to these committees. The composition of these committees is still being determined in many cases on the basis of status and prestige rather than of functional competence or representation of organised village activity. What these committees need are members who have a vital stake in rural development and are, therefore, prepared actively to participate in C.D. and N.E.S. programmes and exert their influence in mobilising public co-operation for their implementation. What they also need are officials who have confidence in the sense of responsibility and capacity for public work on the part of the non-officials and are, therefore, anxious to enlist their active co-operation. Both these things are happening no doubt; but not yet in a measure that leaves an adequate enough impact on the rural community.

Conclusions

Several conclusions stand out from the survey we have made of the achievements of the community project programme. The more important of these are summarised below:—

(1) Almost all villages have been covered by one or more items in the programme.

(2) Items involving physical change, especially constructional and irrigational activity, are widespread, and have contributed in some measure to the production potential and the social over-heads of the block areas.

(3) Items involving physical change in production attitudes in agriculture and animal husbandry are comparatively successful, while it is not possible to say anything about changes in production attitudes among artisans due to the fact that programmes concerning cottage industries are neither widespread nor particularly successful.

(4) Items involving changes in standards or norms of living, especially in regard to primary education and drinking water are comparatively successful, while those concerning adult literacy and personal and environmental hygiene are not equally successful.

(5) Items involving change in social attitudes such as readiness to go in for or maintain community centres, youth clubs, and women's organizations are, generally speaking, not particularly successful.

(6) Items involving change in organisational attitudes in the economic field such as better understanding of the objectives and obligations of co-operation and readiness to make use of co-operative societies for purposes other than credit such as production and marketing are comparatively unsuccessful.

(7) Items involving change in organisational attitudes in the political field such as better understanding of the objectives and responsibilities of panchayat membership and readiness to use panchayats for planning and executing village development programmes are comparatively unsuccessful.

(8) The objective of inducing public participation and positive support has been comparatively successful in the case of constructional programmes, but not in the case of institutional programmes.

(9) While there has been considerable increase in rural consciousness of economic, and to a smaller extent, of social needs, the objective of stimulating continuing and positive effort based on self-help for promoting economic or social development has been comparatively unsuccessful. Too much dependence on Government initiative and assistance is still being exhibited by the vast majority of the rural population affected by the programme.

(10) The rural population in project areas is, generally speaking, now developing a feeling that Government is there not merely to rule but also to help. In fact, expectation of what Government can do to help has perhaps reached a stage beyond the current resources of Government. On the other hand, there has not taken place an equally strong sentiment of self-reliance and initiative, whether individual or co-operative. Unless, therefore, Government deploy more resources in rural areas and the people, in turn, show greater initiative and self-help, a situation is being created in rural India, which is bound to create serious difficulties.

(11) There is wide disparity in the distribution of the achievement and therefore of the benefits of community project programmes. This disparity exists as between different blocks in the project areas. Within the blocks, it exists as between the H.Q. villages of Grama

Sevaks, the villages easily accessible to them, and the villages not so easily accessible. Within the villages, it exists as between cultivators and non-cultivators; and within the cultivating classes, it exists as between cultivators of bigger holdings and larger financial resources. This is a matter of serious concern not only in terms of regional and social justice but also in terms of the political consequences that may ensue in the context of the increasing awakening among the people.

(12) Orientation of the project staff in the objectives and techniques of community development and of the Five-Year Plan is neither adequate nor uniform in distribution.

(13) Advisory Committees at the block and district levels are still to play the role that was expected of them in the development programme. This is due partly to defective membership and partly to continuing reluctance of the official machinery to make full and positive use of the Advisory Committees.

(14) The transition from community project to the P.I.P. pattern has created a number of important problems of maintenance of facilities, satisfaction of demands and activating of project staff. These need to be solved urgently, if we are to activate both the project staff and the population of the project blocks which are now passing into 'post-intensive' phase. Only then can economic and social development of self-sustaining character be made possible for these areas.

III

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS—

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS*

A. R. DESAI

The present paper attempts to make a sociological analysis of the Community Development Projects which have been sponsored by the Government of the Indian Union to assist the reconstruction of the agrarian economy and the rural society.

The Planning Commission in their first Five Year Plan have described the Community Development Projects 'as the method through which Five Year Plan seeks to initiate a process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villages.' It is, according to an U.N.O. report, 'designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and, if possible, on the initiative of the Community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming, by the same use of techniques for arousing it and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response.' The Community Development Projects are of vital importance, according to Pandit Nehru, 'not so much for the material achievements that they would bring about, but much more so, because they seem to build up the community and the individual and to make the latter the builder of his own village centres and of India in the larger sense.'

The word 'Community Development' itself is a novel nomenclature in India. As the Report of the Team for the Study of the Community Projects and National Extension Service (popularly known as the Balwantrai Committee Report) states, 'We have so far used such terms as rural development, constructive work, adult education and rural uplift to denote certain of its aspects. The word "Community" has, for the past many decades, denoted religious or caste groups or, in some instance, economic groups not necessarily living in one locality; but with the inauguration of the community development programme in this country, it is intended to apply it to the concept of the village community as a whole, cutting across caste, religious and economic differences. It is a programme which emphasises that the interest in the development of the locality is necessarily and unavoidably common to all the people living there.' It

*Reproduced from "Sociological Bulletin," Vol. VII, September 1958, No. 2—Indian Sociological Society, pp. 152-165.

is sociologically significant to note that to renovate the agrarian economy and the rural society through the active participation of millions of villagers, the sponsors of this movement could not find an appropriate term in any of the State languages of India to symbolize this vast process. We will examine the postulates underlying this new connotation of the term "Community" subsequently.

The Community Development Projects emerged as a result of inspiration from the following earlier experiments :

(i) Intensive rural development activities carried out at Sevagram and the Sarvodaya centres in the Bombay State ; (ii) The Firca Development Schemes in Madras ; (iii) Experiments to build up community centres for Refugees at Nilokheri and other places ; (iv) And more particularly from the Pilot Projects at Etawah and Gorakhpur in the U.P. under the inspiration of Albert Mayers.

The idea also arose out of a realization that various efforts made by the Government departments such as Agriculture, Animal husbandry, Co-operation, Health, Education and others, which were carried on separately, should be co-ordinated to make them more effective. Further, according to the sponsors of the movement, this programme was launched with a view to changing the very philosophical basis of rural reconstruction. Most of the other institutions approached the village and rural reconstruction work in a philanthropic spirit. The Community Development Movement 'wants to create a psychological change in the villagers ... It aims at inculcating in the villagers new desires, new incentives, new techniques, and a new confidence so that this vast reservoir of human resources may be used for the growing economic development of the country.'

The Community Development Programme was inaugurated on October 2, 1952. Fifty-five Community Projects were launched. Each Project Area comprised about 300 villages, covering an area of 450 to 500 sq. miles, i.e., about 1,50,000 acres with a population of about 2,00,000 persons. A project area was divided into three Development Blocks of hundred villages, each with a population of about 65,000 persons. Each Block was divided into about twenty groups, each containing five villages. Each group of villages was being served by a Gram-Sevak (the village level worker). Of the five villages, one generally became the headquarter of the Gram-Sevak.

The programme launched in 1952 was extended to wider areas at the end of the First Five Year Plan. 603 National Extension Service Blocks, and 553 Community Development Blocks covering 1,57,000 villages and a population of 88.8 million persons were created. Nearly one out of every three villages in India was brought within the orbit of this Programme.

The Second Five Year Plan proposed to bring every village in India under this scheme, 40 per cent of the area being brought under a more intensive development scheme. In all, 3,800 additional Extension Service Blocks will be set up, 1,120 of these being converted into Community Project Blocks. The ambitious scheme has, however, been subsequently modified.

The Community Development Programme is broadly divided into three phases, viz., the National Extension phase, the Intensive Community Development Project phase. Usually, the period of the first phase. Of course, it is not laid down that everywhere the first two phases must follow each other, the National Extension phase in some areas having been skipped over to usher in the Intensive Community Development Project phase. Usually, the period of the first and the second phase is to last for three years each.

In the first phase, the areas selected are subjected to the method of providing services on the ordinary rural development pattern with a lesser Governmental expenditure. In the intensive phase, the blocks selected are subjected to a more composite and more intensive development schemes with larger Governmental expenditure. In the post-Intensive phase, it is presumed that the basis for self-perpetuation of the process initiated during the earlier phases has been created and the need for special Government expenses reduced. Slowly the areas are left in the charge of the Departments for the development.

In 1952-53 series of community projects, the provision per block was Rs. 22 lakhs for a period of three years. This was reduced to Rs. 15 lakhs for the 1953-54 series. The present provision for the N.E.S. stage of three years is Rs. 4 lakhs and for the Community Development stage is Rs. 8 lakhs, making up a total of Rs. 12 lakhs for six years. In other words, the annual expenditure per Block was reduced first from Rs. 7.3 lakhs to Rs. 5 lakhs and now to Rs. 2 lakhs.

An imposing list of activities has been prepared by the sponsors of the Community Development Projects. They include various items connected with the following eight categories of undertakings:

(1) Agriculture and related matters; (2) Communications; (3) Education; (4) Health; (5) Training; (6) Social Welfare; (7) Supplementary Employment; and (8) Housing.

The fourth Evaluation Report of 1957 adopted different criteria for classifying activities undertaken by the Community Development Projects. They divided the programmes of activities into the following major categories: (1) Constructional programmes; (2) Irrigation programmes; (3) Agricultural programmes; and (4) Institutional and

other programmes. The detailed list of the various activities undertaken under each of these programmes is as under:

Constructional programmes : 'Kutchha' roads, 'Pucca' roads, culverts, drains, pavement of streets, school buildings, community centre buildings, dispensary buildings, houses for the Harijans and drinking water sources.

Irrigation Programmes : Wells, pumping sets, tube wells and tanks.

Agricultural Programmes . Reclamation, soil conservation, consolidation of holdings, improved seeds, manure and fertilizer, pesticides, improved methods of cultivation and improved implements.

Institutional and other programmes : Youth Clubs, Women's Organisations, Community Centres, 'Vikas Mandals,' co-operative societies, distribution stores, maternity centres, dispensaries, veterinary dispensaries, key village centres, panchayats, adult literacy centres, primary schools, 'dai' training centres, cottage industries, production-cum-training centres, demonstration plots, soakage pits, smokeless 'chulha.'

An elaborate organization has been created to implement Community Development Projects ; it is known as the Community Project Administration. Originally functioning under the Planning Commission, it is now under the charge of the newly created Ministry of Community Development.

The entire administration is composed of four major types—the Central administration, the State administration, the district organization and the Project administration. The power and the control flow from top to bottom, making it a hierarchic bureaucratic organization. At every level there is an Executive Officer, functioning with the aid of a Development Committee and helped by an Advisory Board. At the Centre, there is an Administrator, at the State level there is a Development Commissioner, at the district level there is a District Development Officer of Collector's grade and at the Project level a Project Level Officer equipped with a staff of some 125 supervisors and Village level workers.

We will now survey the achievements of this programme. It is extremely difficult to give a total quantitative assessment of these achievements for a number of reasons. First, to the best of present writers' knowledge, such overall data have not been compiled. Second, it is not very easy to separate the achievements of the Community Development Projects from those brought about by other

agencies. Some observers have pointed out that a number of activities attributed to the Community Development Project movement should, in fact, be credited to other agencies. We shall, however, accept for the purposes of evaluation, the achievement data in regard to constructional, irrigational agricultural, institutional and other activities as collected by the Fourth Report of the Programme Evaluation organization. It is a data carefully collected from seventeen Project units from different states studied by the Project Evaluation Organization.

The impact of the Community Development Projects has been subjected to analysis and evaluation by a number of scholars and organizations. Prof. Wilson, Prof. Carl Taylor, Prof. Oscar Lewis, Prof. Opler and his team, Prof. Dube, Prof. Mandelbaum and many others have attempted to assess the nature of the impact of the Community Development Projects on the life of the rural people. The Programme Evaluation Organization has also been doing assessment continuously and their Reports are valuable documents. The Bench Mark Surveys also provide insight into the workings of the Community Projects. The popularly known Balwantrai Committee report on the subject is one of the latest authoritative evaluation. Prof. Dube's *India's Changing Villages* is the latest comprehensive and systematic analysis of Community Projects, although based on a very intensive examination of only two different types of villages in U.P. It will be very difficult indeed to adequately indicate here the main findings of these studies and Reports separately. However, a certain general pattern of evaluation emerges which deserves our careful attention.

It should be noted at the very outset that all the scholars and organisations who have evaluated the Community Development Projects, fundamentally accept the major postulates of the economic policy of the Government of India and of the Five Year Plans. Further, all these evaluators have assumed that the Community Development Movement is both desirable and appropriate as a technique of reconstructing the agrarian economy and society of India. Not one of them has even raised a single query or attempted to critically examine the major postulates of the Movement. It is, therefore, necessary to make explicit the major assumptions taken for granted by others. As Prof. Carl Taylor remarks: "The whole concept and Plan of Community Development-Extension programme is that local self-help Village groups will mobilize their natural and human resources for local improvements of all kinds and all technical agencies of Government will aid them in this undertaking." It implies, according to him (i) initiative of people in both formulating and executing the programmes, (ii) therefore the schemes of generating and organizing a large number of voluntary associations almost of primary group nature and also a wide variety of local institutions, (iii) reliance upon group work techniques; (iv) active participation of people in all the

stages of implementation, resulting in local leadership, (v) governmental administrative machinery which acts as an assisting body. The personnel of the administrative machinery, at all levels, should not merely be equipped with administrative and other technical skills but must be fairly well-versed in social skills of evoking voluntary association and community participation.

The philosophy underlying this Movement, in the context of the Indian agrarian society, therefore, implicitly accepts the following major sociological assumptions: (i) the individuals, sections, groups and strata forming the Village Community have a large number of common interests, sufficiently strong to bind them together; (ii) the interests of the various groups and classes within the village are both sufficiently like and common to create general enthusiasm as well as a feeling of development for all; (iii) the interests of the different sections of the community are not irreconcilably conflicting; (iv) the state is a super-class, impartial, non-partisan association and that the major policies of the Government are of such a nature that they do not further sharpen the inequalities between the existing social groups; (v) peoples' initiative and enthusiasm and active participation are possible in the extant village communities because they have common interests.

None of the scholars or the committees have critically inquired as to whether these assumptions about both the Village Communities in India and the Indian State and its governmental policies are valid or not.

However, we will review at present only the major findings of these scholars and committees regarding the operation of Community Development Projects and their impact upon the life of the rural people.

Prof. Taylor and most of the scholars feel that the Government machinery, though staffed by intelligent, hard-working and conscientious persons, has not still assimilated the true spirit underlying the entire programme. The Community Development Extension Programme is operated more as an executive assignment. According to Prof. Taylor, the administration of the programme is predominantly based on aid from and reliance on the Government. The initiative of the people is still lacking. The Government machinery relies more on propaganda and spectacular results rather than on group work and voluntary creative participation. According to Prof. Taylor, a certain amount of active governmental participation was inevitable in a country like India during the earlier phases of the movement. But if that earlier phase was not crossed over and if the movement did not elicit active participation and initiative from the people, the

very basis of the Community Development Programme would crumble. The danger has been slowly raising its head.

Prof. S. C. Dube also comes to the same conclusion. "Planning so far appears to be from the top down. . . . It is necessary to examine the implications and results of the present trends in planning. Because of the unique curbs on Project autonomy its officials hesitated to demonstrate much initiative. What was worse they tended on the official level to accept orders from above, i.e., from the state headquarters, without question or comment, and this despite pronounced private reservations. As an outcome of this trend the officials were oriented less towards the village people, and more towards the pleasing of their official superiors." And further, "A large number of Project-sponsored activities are directed along the lines of traditional government 'drives' rather than according to the proved principles of extension work. Visible accomplishments under such pressure and stimulation and completion of physical targets are greatly valued, and too little attention is given to the question of finding out if the movement is really acquiring roots in the village society." According to Prof. Dube, government servants function as bureaucrats and have not become agents of change with an active social-service mentality.

The Balwantrai Committee Report is critical of the structural foundation of the Community Administration. According to the Report,

"admittedly, one of the least successful aspects of the C.D. & N.E.S. work is its attempt to evoke popular initiative. We have found that few of the local bodies at a level higher than the village panchayat have shown any enthusiasm or interest in this work; and even the panchayats have not come into the fields to any appreciable extent. An attempt has been made to harness local initiative through the formation of *ad hoc* bodies mostly with the nominated personnel and invariably advisory in character. These bodies have so far given no indication of durable strength nor the leadership necessary to provide the motive force for continuing the improvement of economic and social condition in rural areas. So long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institution which will supply the 'local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that expenditure of money upon local objects conforms with the needs and wishes of the locality, 'invest it with adequate power and assign to it appropriate finances, we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development."

The report suggests that the elected Village Panchayat at village level and an elected Panchayat Samiti at the bloc level act as agen-

cies to execute the Community Development Programme and the present Bloc level and Village level bureaucratic machinery be wound up.

In short, the major criticism offered by scholars and Evaluating Committees boils down to the following major points: (i) its bureaucratic nature; (ii) absence of elective principle at any level in the machinery; (iii) decisions taken at the top and communicated below, almost like executive fiat; (iv) considerable confusion in the overall administration of the country, expressed in the relationship between the Project Administration and other Government departments; (v) considerable confusion and conflict with regard to powers and duties, and relative position and seniority within the staff of different departments as a result of their being interlocked with the Project Administration; (vi) duplication of work for a section of the administrative personnel and resultant overworking and the problem of divided loyalty towards functions; (vii) absence of social service mentality; and (viii) lack of social work skills among the staff.

In regard to the actual achievement of the Projects, within the cluster of villages operated by a Gram-sevak, his headquarter-village receives more benefits. Further, it has been found that bigger villages get greater benefits. Similarly, commercial belts receive more facilities than the non-commercial agrarian belts. As the Evaluation Report points out,

"There is wide disparity in the distribution of the achievement and therefore of the benefits of the community project programmes. This disparity exists as between different blocks in the project areas. Within the blocks it exists as between the H.Q. villages 'of Gram-sevaks, the villages easily accessible to them, and the villages not so easily accessible. Within the villages, it exists as between cultivators and non-cultivators; and within the cultivating classes, it exists as between cultivators of bigger holdings and larger financial resources and those of smaller holdings and lesser financial resources. This is a matter of serious concern not only in terms of regional and social justice but also in terms of the political consequences that may ensue in the context of the increasing awakening among the people."

Though this disparity of benefits is recognised, none of the scholars or evaluation organizations has made a systematic analysis of its consequences; its ecological repercussions are not even seen by them. The Indian rural society is undergoing transformation under the impact of numerous forces today. Government's programmes of industrialization, electrification, land reforms, major irrigation works, export and import plans, taxation, commercialization and monetization of various sectors of economic life, and unification of the country through development of means of communication, are producing

important changes in the agrarian areas also. The impact of urbanization and industrialization upon the pattern of rural life are being studied by a number of scholars. Unfortunately, however, none of the evaluators has analysed the impact of the Community Development Project upon the rural life from this wider perspective. Nor have these evaluators indicated the significance of this uneven growth of various regions, blocks, and villages.

The advantages of the improvement, as pointed out by the Community Evaluation Reports, are taken by larger cultivators. As Prof. Dube points out,

"Although the ideal of the Community Development Project was to work for the many-sided development of the entire community, from the foregoing account of its work. . . it is clear that its significant and best organized activities were confined to the field of agricultural extension and consequently the group of agriculturist benefited the most from them. A closer analysis of the agricultural extension work itself reveals that nearly 70 per cent of its benefits went to the elite group and to the more affluent and influential agriculturists. The gains to poorer agriculturists were considerably smaller. . . . For the economic development of this group, as well as for that of the artisans and agricultural labourers, no programmes were initiated by the Project."

Similar observations are made by all the Project Evaluation Reports as well as by scholars like Mandelbaum. This impact of the Community Development Project is fraught with serious consequences. It sharpens the gulf between the rich and the poor cultivators. It makes artisans and agricultural labourers relatively more handicapped than the cultivators and therefore generates greater inequality and wider chasm between the affluent farmers, the agrarian capitalist class on one hand and the poorer strata composed of poor peasants, artisans and agricultural labourers on the other. It implies that in the context of the economy which produces for market and profit, the poor farmers and other strata are made weaker in their competitive strength against the richer strata.

The organizations for rural change are dominated by the upper sections of the rural population. As pointed out by the Programme Evaluation Report, "When one considers the pattern of membership in village organizations, be they co-operative societies, *Vikas Mandals*, Gram Panchayats or Nyaya Panchayats, one clearly finds that the membership is confined to the large cultivators and that the smaller

cultivators as well as landless agricultural labourers, have practically no stake in the organizations of the village." As Prof. Dube has pointed out,

"The Community Development Project sought the co-operation of the existing village institutions such as the village panchayat and the adalati panchayat schools and co-operative societies. Persons holding offices in these bodies or otherwise prominent in the activities were regarded as 'Village Leaders,' and the development officials made a special effort to work closely with them. Some others who had contacts with politicians and officials were also included in this category and were consulted in matters connected with the project. . . . Thus a group of village people having contacts with the world of officials and politicians largely came to be viewed as the local agents of change. . . . The first mistake was in assuming that these people were the leaders. . . . Because of their association with the official and the urban ways of life these leaders as a group had come to possess a special status within the community, but the average villager did not trust them without reservations. Some of the common stereotypes regarding government officials applied in a modified form to these village officials who were recognised as having a semi-government status. . . . Among others included in the category of 'traditional leaders' were the important and influential people in the village. Naturally most of them were from the dominant land-owning group. In identifying power and status with leadership, an important and emerging aspect of group dynamics was ignored. . . . The undue emphasis in working with 'traditional leaders' was construed by villagers as an effort on the part of the Government to maintain a *status quo* in the internal power relations within the village communities and indirectly as a step to support the domination of the land-owning groups."

The same conclusion is drawn by almost all the evaluators. This reliance on the upper stratum of the village population by the Government has sociological significance which cannot be underestimated. Nay, it has serious social implication in terms of the dynamics of rural society. It implies not merely a hold over the economic resources in that area by a small upper class, but also a hold over the political, social and cultural life of the community. It further means that in agrarian area, as a result of the functioning of the community development programmes, a stratum becomes strengthened economically and politically, and utilizes various institutions for its own end.

It also means that in agrarian area, the Community Development Projects are creating an institutional and associational matrix wherein the Government buttresses the economically dominant classes, and in their turn, the economically dominant classes strengthen the power of the present rulers of the State. This development has dangerous significance for the all-round development of the rural society and also for the unprivileged strata of the agrarian area which constitute the bulk of the rural people. It is very unfortunate that the implication of this developmental tendency in terms of class polarization in agrarian area, and the role of the state as an agency of the upper stratum is not fully appreciated.

Almost all the Evaluators have recognized that the contributions to be made by the village people are felt very burdensome by the lower sections of the people. *Shramdan* is the technique by which masses were asked to make contribution to the Community Development. Prof. Dube's observations on *Shramdan* as a voluntary movement of village self-help deserves attention :

"From a close observation and analysis of four *Shramadan* drives... certain points emerge that explain differences in reactions to *Shramadan*. The village elite, as well as the upper status groups have, on the whole, welcomed the *shramdan* drives, and through them the construction and repairs of roads. They gained from it in two ways. First, the repaired and newly built roads facilitated the transport of their sugarcane and grain. Secondly, in these drives they could assert their position of leadership and prestige in the village... as is explained at some length in Chapter VI, because of their status they assumed supervisory roles in this work, and left the hardest and less desirable part of the job to be done by the people of the lower status and lower income groups. Even their token participation won the praise and acclaim of the officials and outside political leaders. The poorer groups, on the other hand, had no practical and visible gain from these projects. Few among them owned bullock carts, and most of them did not have large quantities of sugarcane or wheat to be transported to the urban markets. Their work did not win much praise from outsiders. All that they got often was a formal acknowledgement from the lower officials and some village leaders. They not only had to work hard, but they also lost the wages for the day, which they otherwise might have earned. This explains why many of them viewed this thing as a revival of *begar*, a practice under which influential landowners and government officials compelled the poorer people to work without wages or at nominal wages and which is now prohibited by law."

New associations have been launched or some of the old associations performing those functions have been claimed to be revitalized. Youth clubs, women's organizations, community centres, schools, libraries, adult education classes and social education centres from the predominant type of institutions. These organisations have emerged only in a very few areas. Excepting some institutions like Bhajan Mandalis or Akhadas at some places, very few institutions have taken roots in the villages. A large number of these institutions are operating more as paper organisations. Almost all the evaluators have indicated the failure of this section of the Community Development Programme.

Almost all critics including Taylor, Wilson, the Balwantrai Committee, Dube and V.K.R.V. Rao indicate these trends. They criticise one aspect of the programme or the other. They suggest some symptomatic remedies to cure the ills. Prof. Taylor wants thousands of trained officers, equipped with social skills to make this programme a success. The Balwantrai Committee makes certain proposals for making Village Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis as instruments for operating the Community Development Programmes. It also wants to abolish two-phased division in the form of N.E.S. and C.D. with unequal financial allocations and creation of six-year unit with larger financial allocation. Further, it wants the C.D. Programme to concentrate more on select items like increase in production rather than cultural improvements. According to them, there is nothing wrong with the major premise of the Community Development Projects, nor is there any fundamental fallacy in the postulates of the Five Year Plans. According to these evaluators, the failure of the C.D. Projects in essence is due to one or more of the following factors : ignorance, lack of will on the part of the personnel, faulty organizational principles, fatalism of the vast bulk of the people, lack of technical and social skills, or wrong choice in selection of items. According to Prof. Dube, the main obstacles are : "(i) the general apathy of a considerable part of the village population, (ii) suspicion and distrust of officials and outsiders ; (iii) failure on the part of the Project to evolve effective and adequate media of communications ; (iv) tradition and cultural factors."

Are these costly projects, which do not fulfil their proclaimed major objectives, worth continuing ? Are they not becoming agencies which do not merely defeat the very purpose for which they are ostensibly launched, but are actually playing the harmful role of strengthening the richer strata in the agrarian society ?

In spite of the fact that considerable factual material has been collected which indicates the class structure of the agrarian society, and

which also points out how the agrarian proletariat, a large number of uneconomic holders, and an enormous group of ruined artisans constitute the bulk of the rural community, none of these evaluators confronts the question, viz., how can a programme which essentially supports the upper strata of the rural population and which primarily benefits this minority in strengthening it institutionally, be called a Community Development Programme ? The very name, to say the least, is deceptive.

Sociologically, the Community Development Programme is not merely proving futile in its acclaimed goals, but is becoming harmful.

IV

SOCIAL WELFARE IN RURAL AREAS— VARIOUS EFFORTS*

SOCIAL WELFARE

In a review of the trends in rural reconstruction the contribution of the various non-official agencies in the sphere of social welfare must be recognised. Mahatma Gandhi, who was more a social reformer than a politician, developed his scheme for the revival of the *charkha* (the spinning wheel) and the encouragement of *Swadeshi* which proved the basic principles of the organisations which were constituted for social reform. The All-India Spinners' Association gave the *charkha* a central place in its programme of economic and social uplift. The All India Village Industries Association concentrated on the programme of developing village industries, which were necessary for the daily life of the large masses of the population. It also aimed at training a band of village welfare workers and skilled craftsmen. The *Goseva Sangh* (society for the service of the cow) had for its objective an all-round improvement in the condition of the cow and for its programme a campaign for the preservation of the cattle wealth of India. The Wardha scheme of Basic Education formed the first plank in a scheme of social and economic reforms. All these institutions have the impress of Mahatma Gandhi's conception of rural reconstruction. The Sriniketan Institute of Rural Reconstruction, now an integral part of the Visvabharati University owed its origin to the conception of the poet Rabindranath Tagore which differed from the above institutions more in the methods of approach than in the objectives. The Servants of India Society has a network of branches all over the country to propagate the spirit of selfless service to the population and has its part in improving the social conditions in the villages. The *Hindusthani Talimi Sangh* and Kasturba National Memorial Trust, are other prominent institutions which have been spreading their constructive work throughout the country. It is estimated that in all, there are about 10,000 private institutions engaged in social work.

The Government of India have constituted the Social Welfare Board, which is an all-India and independent organisation functioning under the administrative control of the Ministry of Education with a view to advising and helping voluntary social welfare agencies to maintain and

*Reproduced from "Post-war Agricultural Problems and Policies in India," by S. Thirumalai, pp. 247-249.

develop their existing programmes and to integrate them in the general pattern of the Five Year Plan. The functions of the Board include a survey of the needs and requirements of the social welfare organisations in the country, sanction of grant-in-aid to deserving organisations, evaluation of programmes of social welfare and co-ordination of assistance extended to social welfare agencies by the Central and State Governments. Regarding the financial assistance the guiding principle would be that only such organisations which are doing active work in the field of social welfare, consistent with the programmes recommended by the Planning Commission, will be eligible for aid. The funds should be utilised for the largest number of beneficiaries. The maximum ceiling of grant or assistance would be a sum not exceeding Rs. 15,000/- in each case. Normally, the grants would be on a 'matching' basis, that is, they would not be available unless the organisations manage to raise a certain percentage from other sources. In the welfare schemes priorities will be given to child welfare, women's welfare and welfare of the handicapped.

Problems in Rural Development

The problems under rural reconstruction are mainly concerned with a readjustment of corporate life in the villages and a reorganisation of the administrative machinery at the primary level for an adequate and purposive comprehension and enforcement of the obligations of the agricultural community in all aspects of development, economic, social and cultural. The problems are related, therefore, to purposes of development as well as agencies of reconstruction. The review of the progress of reconstruction activities in the last few decades has indicated that until recently there was no comprehensive and integrated approach to the problem barring a few isolated experiments referred to earlier. The State had accepted only a very limited responsibility in this sphere. The recent conception of the Community Projects and Extension Service, however, has opened up new vistas in the realm of rural reconstruction. Their success, however, will depend upon a clear recognition of the past vicissitudes and the present needs and conditions of rural life.

The new schemes of community development and extension have two limitations. The system of organisation is based on official strength at the top levels. It aims at multiplying agencies rather than consolidating and utilising existing agencies. The second limitation is the inadequacy of trained personnel having rural affinity and an intimate knowledge of local conditions. The clear implication of these facts is that co-ordination for the effective utilisation of all welfare and educational agencies working with rural people is of the highest importance.

Under the present conditions of village life the purposes of readjustment are mainly agricultural development, development of village industries, health and sanitation, education and social life, and transport. In order to integrate these activities, the traditional pattern of organisation is held as the model. It is suggested that these functions can be fulfilled by three agencies at the village level, *panchayat* for administration and social life, the multipurpose co-operatives for economic development and village school for education and cultural activities. The point for emphasis is that the administrative machinery at the village level must be an integrated unit by itself to serve every need of the individual and the community. It must also be simple in its constitution and processes of operation. Only such efficient village institutions can establish and safeguard social equality which is the basis of village life.

SECTION IX

**BHOODAN AND
GRAMDAN MOVEMENTS**

I

THE BASIS OF BHOODAN YAGNA*

ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE

THE BASIS OF BHOODAN YAGNA

Our work consists in changing the present social order from the very root. This is the secret of this Bhoodan campaign. That is why when people ask me whether this can be done by legislation alone, I reply in the negative. This is not a one-sided movement. When it succeeds the State will change, the Government will change and the life-structure will change.

To the society which we seek to build up I have given the name "Samyayogi Society." I struck at this word from the Gita which teaches us to do unto others as we do unto ourselves. We should treat others in the same manner as we want to be treated by them. So also we must behave towards society as we aspire to be treated by it. When Hanuman met Ravana he placed before him the injustice of the latter's act in having stolen Rama's consort. He told him that he

*Reproduced from the Principles and Philosophy of the Bhoodan Yagna, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, 1955, pp. 1-5 ; 15-16.

(Ravana) could easily see the error of his ways since he (Ravana) was himself a *grahastha* (householder). He asked him to visualise the situation in the event of his own wife being kidnapped.

In the Chapter on fasts ('*roza*'), the Holy Quran enjoins on all followers to observe fast during the month of Ramzan. Somebody raised a misgiving whether those who could not bear the pangs of hunger would be regarded as an outcast. The prophet spoke, "No, if on that day they feed a hungry man they would win the credit of a fast." Now what is grand about it? The grandeur lies in your feeling what it is to suffer from pangs of hunger when you must take it that your duty lies in alleviating others' hunger. Gita has given it the name of *Atmopamiya* (like-Self). This is not something particular to Hinduism alone. You will find it in all religions. This is termed the golden rule. In case one does not feel the pangs of hunger he cannot be enjoined to feed the hungry. If one does not feel the pangs of thirst he cannot be enjoined to slake the thirsty throat.

I ask the land-owners to imagine from their own experience the condition of those who own no land. I ask the property-owners to imagine from their experience the conditions of those who own no property. If you have any appreciation of their feeling it is enjoined upon you to distribute among them the extra that you have. This is your Dharma.

The most essential requisite of a *Samyaggyi* social structure is that all land, all property, and all wealth should belong to society. Only Vishnu can be the lord of Lakshmi, a seat which you have usurped. Bhartruhari has said that to us Lakshmi is mother, and we are her children. On the contrary, to-day we aggrandise ourselves as her Lord. I feel this is injustice, and a denial of religion. It is not a single individual behaving thus, but the whole of society. Should somebody commit adultery it is his fault and not that of the society. But if the social structure be such that it grants the right of ownership of land to some, of ownership of property to others and so on, everybody would enjoy what he gets hold of. And all this is regarded sacred and holy! Now the priests of Vaidyanathdam assaulted me. When I pondered over it I felt that they believed that we were out to destroy religion and they were out to protect it by the force of arms. Where religion enjoys such sanctions irreligion gets entrenched very deep.

What I want to inculcate among the people is that our body is made from and of society and for the service of the society. Service is thus a debt on our shoulders which we have to repay. We are distinct from our body. So when we are not the owners or masters of even our body, how dare we claim our right on other things as land and property? Ganga loves all alike. She quenches the thirst of the lion as also of the cow. Should somebody claim his right upon such

a beneficent Ganga, would we accept it? If none has a claim on the Ganga, how can we have on land or property?

I go on saying from village to village that if classes or differences had been dear to God's heart. He would not have provided everybody with one nose. He would have granted one nose to a poor man while ten or more to a minister. But he feels that everybody requires nose and should have equal right to breathe air. As none can claim ownership of air, water or sunshine, so also none can claim that of land. Should somebody claim it, that is due to wrong idea which is irreligious. Hence I have given it the name of moral revolution—*Dharma-Pravarthan*. I want to root out the wrong ideas and erect the new society on the basis of religious ideas.

It is why I demand one-sixth of land. There are some 5 crores of landless people in our country. For them we require five crores of acres, about one-sixth of good land available in India. In case these calculations come out to be incorrect I would demand again more land. For what I want is that there must be a complete redistribution of land and property, as also of power.

Today we are busy in national planning. In fact we require a village planning. People of the village should exercise their own brain to do things. Should somebody err only one village would suffer. But when the stewardship of the whole country is entrusted to four or five persons the whole country has to suffer the consequence of their any single mistake. But this will not be so when power resides in the village itself. If one village commits a certain blunder another would not repeat it. Hence, power should be distributed in every village. There must be decentralisation of power like the one set up by God. We do not want to imitate Russia or China in this. God does not reserve for Himself the store of wisdom, nor does He supply it according to individual needs. He distributes all unto all.

Still people have to co-operate among themselves. Co-operation is of two kinds. First is to give one's all and share with others. Second is that proverbial co-operation of the blind and the lame. Had the latter been the desired objective God would have bestowed four eyes to one, four ears to another and bid them co-operate. This amounts to a co-operative society of the disabled! But God has not ordained this variety of society. He had provided everybody with all things and made them able and bid them co-operate. In other words, the wisdom of all should form one whole. Of course He could have made man all-sufficient and all-able. But He felt that life would then lose all charm.

We have to build up a society in which every calling is equally paid. Every calling has an importance of its own. That one work should be valued more than another is an injustice. Take for instance

the work of a train-signaller. What great responsibility this carries! A signaller's work is a responsibility of a type unique in itself.

It may be admitted that the responsibility implied in one work differs from that in another. But equal wages would have to be paid to all unless and until it is established that the one with a greater responsibility feels more hungry than the one with a lesser responsibility. It is wrong to pay according to the responsibility involved in a work or its extent.

In fact, our objective is three-fold. Firstly, power should be decentralised from village to village; secondly, everybody should have a right on land and property; thirdly, there should be no distinction in the matter of wages etc. With this aim in view I have introduced the lever of Bhoodan in order that a Samya-Yogi order may be established. Hence I go from village to village. People ask me why I would not apply "pressure" over our Government to frame law accordingly. I am, in fact, not interested in it. What I am interested in, is in reducing the governmental authority itself and in the creation of a New Social Order. I have resorted to this problem of land with this objective.

We want to bring about an equilibrium or an equality in society. None can profit from an unequal and unbalanced society.

Samya-Yoga means "levelling" the field. That we have to do. Ours is not merely to distribute land but to level up the mental values of the entire society. With this mental approach you go from village to village and explain the idea. Go with a complete confidence in the heart of every one you approach.

BHOODAN YAGNA : ALL-COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME

Bhoodan Yagna is an all comprehensive movement directed to the reform in all walks of life. Today everyone thinks of himself alone and feels for his self only. But Bhoodan makes the people think and do just the opposite of what they do now. It makes the people look around and say "I will first think of my neighbour, and if he has no land, I must consider it is my duty to provide him with it." In Bhoodan, distribution of land is not the only question.

It aims at the moral regeneration of the whole nation in fact. Through it we hope to solve the economic difficulties in our society. With all these hopes I am concentrating all my attention on it. If we succeed in this we are sure to succeed in everything else.

When village industries are encouraged, unemployment will disappear. Cottage industries can never prosper unless the land is equitably distributed. So Bhoodan takes in the programme for the revival of cottage industries also within it.

The great aloofness that we find in society today between the educated and the uneducated will not disappear unless both are made to join in common work. We have to inculcate in our people the habit and delight for doing manual work. The education that our children get now in schools, is devoid of any manual labour. They do not know how to earn their living and how to improve the country's economic conditions. So Shramadan (labour-gifts) is also initiated. This will bring an entire change to the whole life of the country. We have to reclaim and make the waste lands included in some of the gifts offered in Bhoodan, cultivable. Students can join this work and thus offer their share of gift of labour.

I am also claiming a share of the wealth in people's hand, through Sampatti-Dan. Much wealth lies invested in gold and silver. It is wrong to keep wealth dead like this. The nation should get the benefit of it. That is why I ask those people who keep such wealth, to give a share of it for the good of society.

II

BHOODAN, ITS EVALUATION*

DANIEL THORNER

As contrasted with the disappointing progress of legislative land reform the only alternative which has seemed to offer a promising way forward has been Acharya Vinoba Bhave's *Bhoodan* (land-gift) movement. The focus of this is on improving the position of the most submerged and dis-advantaged class in the countryside, the utterly landless. Assuming that there were 50 million landless peasants in India, Vinobaji set himself the task of collecting in land-gifts 50 million acres, so that one acre could be given to each landless peasant. With an average of five members, each such family, it was hoped, would end up with 5 acres. He called in Gandhian terms upon the landowners to feel compassion for the plight of the landless and to demonstrate their compassion by giving to the Bhoodan movement one-sixth of their holdings. Since roughly 300 million acres were under cultivation in India, such gifts, if made all over the country, would total up to the required 50 million acres. Under the guidance of Bhoodan workers these gifts would then be suitably redistributed.

The inspiration for Bhoodan had come to Vinobaji in 1951 when he was touring the Telengana districts of Hyderabad. This was the area where the Communists had recently called off an "activist" agrarian campaign during which a good few landlords had lost both their lands and their lives. Through Bhoodan Vinobaji aimed to show the peasantry that there was an efficacious alternative to the Communist programme. The movement got off to a good start; from 1952 to 1954 more than 3 million acres of land were received as Bhoodan. The largest part of this was collected in 1953 in Bihar, to which State Vinobaji had early shifted his headquarters from Hyderabad. He had, in fact, set up his camp in Gaya District, a long centre for Communist work among the peasantry. Vinobaji and his followers declared that they would make Gaya District the Bardoli of Bhoodan, a moving reference to the famous campaign of 1928 led by the late Vallabhbhai Patel among the Gujarati peasants of Bardoli district. The high hopes raised by the early progress of Bhoodan were soon brought into question, however, by sober assessment of the accomplishments of the movement, and by careful consideration of its basic nature and presuppositions.

*Reproduced from *Agrarian Prospect in India* by Daniel Thorner, pp. 74-77.

In Bihar it turned out that much of the land donated as Bhoodan was rocky, barren, or otherwise agriculturally poor, or was under dispute in current litigation. In other States land donated was found to be just the excess, which under reform legislation already on the statute books or then before the legislatures, the donors shortly might have been required, in any event, to hand over by law. Even greater difficulties have been encountered, in practice, in distributing such lands as have been donated. Only a small percentage, in point of fact, has been turned over to the landless: out of a total of $3\frac{1}{2}$ million acres of land received by May, 1955, about 0.2 million acres have been redistributed, i.e., 5 per cent. Like ceilings, Bhoodan has received the verbal support of the Congress Party, particularly at the highest echelons. But district and taluk leaders have generally been far from enthusiastic. For political purposes they may associate their names briefly with the Bhoodan work. Some have attempted to gain control over Bhoodan redistribution so as to enlarge or strengthen their following. Vinobaji's resistance to these efforts accounts, in part, for the delay in redistribution.

A fundamental weakness of Bhoodan is that its appeal is directed not to the poor and landless (whose own interest naturally would lead them to welcome it), but to the rich and landed. These are the very people who, as we have shown in Lecture III, have succeeded to date in getting around or defeating all types of land reform. When the Bhoodan campaigners march into their village, these well-off folk make a good show by giving away a few patches of land. But they are careful to retain securely in their grasp the holdings and associated economic operations upon which their control of the village rests. The basic concept of Bhoodan, spreading the ownership of land, is a generous one; but even if realized in practice it would not amount to thorough-going land reform. For, like ceilings, Bhoodan fails to come to grips with the central elements in India's agrarian problem. These may be restated as follows:

(1) a peculiarly complex property structure topped by the State's claiming what amounts to a proprietary right to "rent."

(2) the survival, despite land reforms and "abolition of intermediaries," of a class of non-cultivating proprietary right-holders who continue to take substantial rents from the working peasantry—tenants, tenants-at-will, or cropsharers; where these proprietors cultivate by hiring labourers, they pay low wages:

(3) the consequent persistence, after land reform, of a considerable gap between proprietary right-holding and the physical cultivation of land.

(4) the actual cultivation of land by tillers who are chronically and seriously short of physical capital and financial resources ; severely limited use of improved implements ; and low yields ;

(5) in this setting the lack of impetus to economic reorganization ; land remains subdivided and fragmented ; the unit of production in agriculture is tiny.

These five elements form part of a rural context in which a small minority of villagers generally enjoy an effective concentration of local economic, social and political power ; while the great mass of peasants have to strive to carry on under conditions of multiple disadvantage. The landowners who form the core of the little oligarchies that run India's villages do not own all of the land of India's villages ; more often than not, they have less than half. But the land under their control is likely to be the most valuable in the village. Where land is generally given out to tenants or cropsharers, they are likely to give out the most ; where servants or labourers are engaged to work the land, these landowners are likely to be the biggest employers. The same fortunate few are active in rural moneylending, marketing and processing (grinding, crushing, milling). In this setting the mass of weak and humble folk have to do the bidding of their more powerful neighbours.

III

SAMPATTIDAN AND BHOODAN MOVEMENT*

C. G. SHAH

MOTIFF OF BHOODAN AND SAMPATTIDAN MOVEMENTS

The Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements, based on the theory of the possibility of the ethical transmutation of the heart of those who own land and wealth so that they would voluntarily relinquish a substantial portion of their possessions are, according to Jay Prakash, the decisive means to bring into being such an equalitarian society. The hearts of the wealthy classes, however, callous they be at present, will thaw when incessantly stormed by powerful ethical appeals to their essential human nature and they must, in course of time, part with their surplus wealth for the benefit of the poverty-stricken section of the population. This would result in the diminution of the present staggering disparities of incomes between the members of the community and even their final disappearance. Thus an equalitarian society will be painlessly born.

Are not the wealthy also human beings and have, therefore, basically human hearts ?

IDEOLOGICAL INSPIRATION OF THE MOVEMENT

It must be noted that the ideology inspiring these movements is not a new one. It, historically, originated with the dissolution of primitive Communist Society and the rise of the class society when, as a result of the private ownership of the social means of production, exploitation and economic inequalities came into existence in the social world. Since then, every class society—slave, feudal and capitalist—projected groups of humanists who, not comprehending the economic genetic cause of these inequalities, viz., private ownership of the social means of production, engaged themselves in making perennial ethical appeals to the exploiting classes to use a portion of their wealth to alleviate the poverty of the exploited classes through philanthropic and charity schemes. The inherited religious and secular ethical literature of all peoples abounds in directives addressed to the wealthy classes to part with a good portion of their wealth to rescue

*Reproduced from "Sampattidan and Bhoodan Movement," by C. G. Shah, pp. 3-16.

the poor from want. Christ, Buddha and, in recent times, Gandhi, too, incessantly bombarded the auditory nerve of the rich exploiters with moral admonitions to that effect. The survey of all history, however, decisively proves that this technique of liquidating poverty and economic disparities rampant in the social world has decisively failed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BHOODAN AND SAMPATTIDAN MOVEMENTS

The Bhoodan movement is distinguished from the Sampattidan movement, since the former aims at the redistribution of land, the basic means of production in agriculture, in contrast to the latter which aims at the redistribution, not of the basic means of production such as factories, and others but of the income derived by their capitalist owners on the basis of that ownership. This invests the programme of Sampattidan with a bourgeois class character since it endorses by implication capitalist private property in the means of production. It does not ask the capitalists to surrender this property which enables them to exploit the workers but appeals to them to set aside a portion of their profits born of this exploitation for relieving the distress of the poor. The right of the capitalists to own the means of production and thereby exploit labour and accumulate profit is implicitly, if not articulately, regarded moral and therefore sacrosanct. Immorality attaches only to the income from the exploitation not to the exploitation itself. Unlike in the sphere of agriculture the programme has for its objective a reshuffling of the income, not a redistribution of the means of production, the fountain source of that income. The bourgeoisie is only called upon to expand the scale of its charity and philanthropic activities. This reminds one of the incisive definition of charity given by Paul Lafargue viz., "Charity is robbing wholesale and giving retail."

Another striking feature of these movements consists in the fact that, regarding the method to achieve their objective, their sponsors—Vinoba Bhawe and now Jay Prakash Narayan who has expanded the limited agrarian programme of the former into a universal socio-economic programme—exclusively restrict the means to that of the ethical reconstruction of the consciousness of primarily the wealthy classes. Even Gandhi, who equally stood for the preservation and perpetuation of the capitalist-landlord social system, while addressing moral appeals to the capitalists periodically reinforced this ethical weapon by strikes, peasant satyagrahas and others to exert pressure on them to redistribute their incomes to a little advantage of the masses. Surely he conducted those struggles within the matrix of the fundamental conception of the basic community of interests of the capitalists and the workers, the landlords and the peasants, and the resultant class collaborationist view, still he did not discard such episodic class struggles

as pressure technique to back up ethical appeals. Jay Prakash, on the other hand, regards even such struggles as socially and morally disastrous for the creation of a non-violent equalitarian society. Addressing a gathering of industrial workers in Bombay he remarked:

“By persuasion and propaganda we can change the hearts of the people. . . The Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements will usher in the millennium in the country. There must be no class consciousness, there must be equality. This is my conception of a free state. The Sampattidan movement, if it succeeded, would in the very near future eliminate the profit-making instinct of capitalists.” He further said, “some businessmen and industrialists have expressed in favour of the Gandhian ideal of trusteeship and, I feel, the day is not far off when that ideal will be realised without the use of force or compulsion.”

LIMITATIONS OF BOURGEOIS CHARITY

The individual capitalists who succeed in the competitive struggle are compelled to set apart a big portion of the profits to renew, expand or rationalize their productive technique. If they fail to do so, they would be ruined in the further competitive struggle. It is the remaining portion of profit which they spend on themselves and, sometimes, for charitable and philanthropic work.

But this portion is a very small fraction of the total profit. Under pain of not losing in the competitive struggle the capitalist needs to spend a greater and greater section of the profit in further investment in the means of production.

Compared to the increasing poverty which the capitalist system of production, governed by its own objective laws, generates, the meagre alleviation of working people's misery which the capitalists, even if they are universally surcharged with humanist emotion for the victims of their exploitation, could achieve, would be more than counter-balanced by the existing and new impoverishment which the system generates.

Even what charity or philanthropy the capitalists practise, is motivated mainly, consciously or sub-consciously by individual or class interests. The chase for limelight drives some to start or endow institutions. Others build hospitals, for, disease is infectious and the poor when struck down with disease, can convince the rich of their common humanity by transmitting the infection to them. Some may construct workers' chawls, for, labour must be kept efficient for being exploited to the maximum, hence be provided with minimum housing. Capitalist production needs trained cadres, therefore, technical and other

educational institutions must be financed. Starvation is not infectious, therefore, no capitalist charity assures the starving that they will be provided with two square meals.

It is not the change of heart which supplies motiff to capitalist charity and philanthropy. It is mostly craze for fame or conscious or unconscious class interest.

IS THERE A FREE-WILL FOR THE CAPITALIST ?

There is a vital reason why the capitalist cannot help—there is no free will for him—pursuing the road of ever increasing profit which is the fundamental urge of his psyche. Historical materialism alone can explain this phenomenon. According to it, the consciousness of man is primarily the product of the mode of his livelihood, therefore, of the position he occupies in the economic structure of society. In the existing capitalist economic structure of society, the capitalist starts with a definite amount of capital, buys means of production, hires and exploits labour, and annexes surplus value which via market is transformed into his profit. The original capital *M* returns to him, with the addition of this profit, as *M'*. The motiff of his entire economic activity is to transform the original capital into increased capital. It is an automatic chase for profit. Perennially engaged in this profit-chasing activity, he builds up profit-chasing instincts and exploitative psychology. The postulate of a common human nature of all men as such is a false postulate of idealistic psychology. Capitalist human nature with its profit-hankering and exploitative urges is quite different from the human nature of the proletariat when the latter liberates itself from the pressure of the capitalist ideology and which then becomes co-operative socialist. The mode of material living primarily moulds the psychology of the group and the class living in class society. There are only class men with class human natures in class society. An individual human with chemically pure human nature to which a pure human appeal can be addressed with a view to persuade him to act humanly and humanely is a myth of idealistic sociology.

The profit-chasing and greedy psychology of the capitalists is determined by the position they occupy in the capitalist economic structure viz., that of exploiters of labour and chasers after profits. Marx, in *Capital*, explains this as follows:

“The simple circulation of commodities (as in the case of handicraftsmen), selling in order to buy, is a means of carrying out a purpose unconnected with circulation namely the satisfaction of wants. The circulation of money as capital is, on the contrary, an end in itself, for, the expansion of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The circulation of capital has, therefore, no limits. Thus, the conscious representative of this movement, the pos-

essor of money, becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts and to which it returns. The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or main-spring of the circulation, becomes his subjective aim. He functions as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and will. The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at.

"This boundless greed after riches, this passionate chase is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser. The never-ending augmentation of exchange value, which the miser strives after by seeking to save his money from circulation, is attained by the more acute capitalist by constantly throwing it afresh into circulation."

Thus the psychology of the capitalist human nature, his profit-making instincts, his exploitative impulses, his greed for more wealth, arise out of his specific activity in the cycle of capitalist production. It is the psychological outgrowth of his practice in the capitalist economic process. Till he is a capitalist, he will have his inescapable capitalist psychology. Gandhi's moral appeals to the capitalists for over two decades to change their hearts and act as trustees of their property did not affect them by an iota. If at all, they have during and after the second world war become more inhuman exploiters of the working people, more corrupt and brutal. And they cannot help behaving so since, as Marxist materialist psychology reveals, the consciousness of a class is the product of the material conditions of its existence.

BOURGEOIS PHILOSOPHY: A PRODUCT OF BOURGEOIS SOCIETY

Regarding the futility of the moral appeals to the exploiting classes, Lenin used to narrate the story of Vaska the Cat. This cat had domiciled in the palace of Peter the Great, the Czar of Russia and used to commit depredations in the kitchen of the Great Czar. It used to invade and consume dishes destined for the royal stomach of the august Czar. The palace cook, a pacifist and like Jay Prakash an exponent of the theory of the change of heart, used to make moral appeals to Vaska to abstain from its immoral bandit's activity. Vaska the Cat listened but went on eating.

So our capitalists and other wealthy classes will listen to the ethical admonitions of Jay Prakash Narayan, even extol and banquet him, but will go on exploiting and piling up wealth.

THEIR ROLE

The Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements are foredoomed to failure because they come in conflict with the laws of economy and psychology. Regarding the Bhoodan movement, the tempo of its

advance has already slowed down. This is because the donation of land of big landowners was prompted not so much by any change of heart but by the strategic motive of safeguarding by far the greater amount of land owned by them by conceding a small portion of it mostly, fallow and uneconomic. This voluntary sacrifice on their part, in their view, would insure them against the kisan struggle which has been advancing with the slogan of expropriation of all their land. The chaotically collected land and their redistribution among the peasants could hardly help the poor and miserable strata of the peasantry. In the absence of cheap credit for livestock, seeds and other prerequisites for agricultural operations, they could not utilise even the little advantage offered to them. Only the rich capitalist section could exploit such a situation and benefit by it. Further, since the motive inspiring the big landowners was not any change of heart but that of a strategic safeguard of their remaining land against any peasant demand for complete expropriation, the process of voluntary donation was bound to slow down and come at a deadlock at some stage.

A BRAKE ON SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Though the Bhoodan and Sampattidan movements are, due to the above-mentioned reasons, bound to prove futile from the standpoint of the objective which their sponsors have in view, they can do harm to the growing class struggle in the country. By sowing illusions among the backward sections of the exploited classes, they can paralyse them and disrupt the unity of class struggle which alone can liberate them from exploitation and poverty. They would also tend to kill the healthy class consciousness and the spirit of reliance on their own class action as a means of their emancipation. They would make them feel grateful to their capitalist and landlord exploiters. They would divert them from the road of class struggle, the only road to their freedom.

The sponsors of the movement eschew not only mass action, strikes and satyagrahas and others, but even legislative methods of securing favourable legislation in the interest of the poverty-stricken sections of population. The movement, therefore, sabotages both mass action as well as parliamentary struggles as means of securing economic relief for the masses. The programme of the movement is reduced exclusively to that of moral appeals to the wealthy classes. This is putting into operation the change of heart theory of Gandhi with a vengeance. This is even outdoing the Mahatma who, despite his class collaborationist theory, stood for organising strike and satyagraha struggle to back up his campaign of moral appeals to the rich. Jay Pakash Narayan may now claim to have purged Gandhism of its non-spiritual adulteration.

CLASS STRUGGLE: THE ONLY WAY

The poverty-stricken Indian masses cannot, however, afford to be martyrs of such illusions in the present situation. Due to the organic crisis of the capitalist-landlord system, their poverty and misery are daily being aggravated. They cannot afford to listen to and be paralysed by illusions. Impelled by the biological impulse, the very will to live, they must discard the road of this fictitious solution of their poverty and advance on the road of the only real solution of that poverty, the road of class struggle.

IV

THE GRAMDAN MOVEMENT*

MANMOHAN CHOUDHURI

THE LATEST PHASE OF BHOODAN

The renunciation of private property in land on a mass scale through Gramdans is the latest and most significant development of the Bhoodan movement that is attracting widespread attention. Though the Gramdan movement began as far back as 1952 with the rather unexpected and spontaneous action of the villagers of Mangroth in U.P. it was only during and after Vinobaji's foot-march through Orissa, that the movement assumed mass proportions. We propose to briefly outline the genesis, development and future outlook of the movement in the following pages, with special reference to Orissa.

The first Gramdan in Orissa was obtained in Manpur, in the Cuttack district on 30th January, 1953 and shortly afterwards the movement caught on in the Koraput district where 26 Gramdans were received by the time Vinobaji entered Orissa on the 26th January, 1955. A few Gramdans had also been received in the districts of Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Ganjam and Sambalpur, but with Vinobaji's progress southwards, naturally, more attention was centred on Ganjam and Koraput, where Bhoodan workers from all over the province concentrated their efforts with the result that by the time Vinobaji left Orissa, the total number for the province reached 812 with 606 to the credit of Koraput alone. Since then the movement has continued to progress and the number of Gramdans has almost doubled, while the movement has spread to ten out of the thirteen districts in the province. We give below a district-wise break-up of the figures:

TOTAL GRAMDANS IN ORISSA AS ON 15TH DECEMBER, 1956.

1. Koraput	1226
2. Balasore	185
3. Mayurbhanj	62
4. Ganjam	54
5. Sambalpur	12
6. Sundergarh	15
7. Keonjhar	2
8. Dhenkanal	1
9. Puri	17
10. Cuttack	1
Total :	1575

*Reproduced from the Gramdan Movement by Manmohan Choudhuri
pp. 1-19.

The average population of a village in Orissa is a little more than three hundred. The villages received in Gramdan are generally the smaller ones, with an average population of one hundred and twenty. It is but natural that villages with a homogeneous population of peasants, labourers and artisans habituated to physical labour should be the first to offer themselves in Gramdan. The larger villages with high-caste families of sub-letting landowners, money-lenders etc. are at present holding back. Kharka in Koraput district is the largest Gramdan village with a population of 900 while the smallest hamlet has a population of eight. The total population of all the villages is estimated at two lakhs.

Most of the villages in the Koraput district and elsewhere are Adivasi in character, each village being generally inhabited by a single tribe. This circumstance is doubtless one of the major predisposing factors, but there is a considerable number of villages with non-Adivasi and mixed populations. The number of such villages in Koraput exceeds 150 and is 80 in the Balasore district. All the villages in Sambalpur are non-Adivasi in character.

The movement has not been confined to Orissa but has simultaneously continued to spread in the other states also, so that there are already Gramdans in eleven of the states. A further development in Tamilnad is Grama Sankalpa, by which the villagers take a four-fold pledge :—

1. To give land to all the landless,
2. To eradicate untouchability and casteism,
3. To take to Khadi and Village Industries within a stipulated period, and
4. To have basic education in the village.

Twenty-six villages have already taken the pledge and the idea is spreading. This is in effect a combined pledge of Gramdan and subsequent reconstruction.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE

Gramdan on such a vast scale opens up the most exhilarating possibilities of social reconstruction and economic upliftment, of building up a new social order based on equality and co-operation. The voluntary renunciation of private property and eager acceptance of the new way of life of "getting along together," unleashes undreamt of reservoirs of constructive social energy, repressed under the deadweight of an outmoded, exploitive and competitive social system. It is coming to be more and more generally recognised that

popular enthusiasm and participation is an essential ingredient for the success of economic planning. Some of the spectacular results achieved in New China in recent years have been attributed, no doubt rightly, to the above causes. In any society this energy is generated on a considerable scale only when the underdogs, the underprivileged classes, get a feeling that they are getting a fair deal, that they are real participants in the rebuilding of a new order, not merely so many 'hands' employed in renovating the old.

This has happened to a certain extent after the Communist revolution in China, but while the latter has succeeded in liberating the energies of the under-privileged masses, it has also, in the process of doing so, generated conflict and hostility on a considerable scale, the repercussions of which are being felt throughout the world to-day. It has brought into being forces that have complicated the problem of world peace.

Adherents of the democratic process have set their faces strongly against the fundamentally violent methods adopted in China and elsewhere, and it had seemed that planned progress in a democracy is bound to be a slow process and cannot hope to show the spectacular results achieved in the Communist countries. This has posed a fine problem for the underdeveloped and newly independent countries of the world. For them rapid economic progress is a *sine qua non* of their continued existence and yet, how far can they avoid being entangled in the methods of totalitarian regimentation, in their eager efforts to force the pace?

Here the Gramdan movement provides an alternative. Here is a movement that has succeeded in at least subduing if not eliminating the individualistic traits in the peasantry, has put hope into the underdog, and yet, while liberating the repressed creative energies, has not generated the least amount of friction and ill-will having based itself on the purely peaceful methods of persuasion.

Here the reader may pertinently ask, to what extent is the success of the movement due to the real psychological changes wrought in the minds of the people and how far due to the circumstances peculiar to the areas? Is it not a fact that the movement has made considerable headway only among the backward Adivasis, and has demonstrably failed to catch on in the more advanced districts? Is not land plentiful and cheap in the sparsely populated district of Koraput? Have not the Adivasis very little attachment for land, and are in the habit of shifting cultivation?

It is a fact that the movement has had more success among the Adivasis, who have a strong tradition of social cohesiveness. But this merely underlines the fact that even the backward classes in India

have some valuable social traits highly useful for a new Sarvodaya or socialist order and the Gramdan movement is helping to preserve and canalise them. As a matter of fact, as we have noted earlier, quite a large number of villages with mixed and non-Adivasi populations have opted for Gramdan.

In this context it is significant that the movement seems to have caught on in the non-Adivasi and relatively more advanced state of Tamilnad, which has uptill now more than forty Gramdans to its credit.

Another predisposing factor in Koraput was the awakened consciousness of the people due to their participation in the national freedom struggle since the early thirties and the subsequent intensive constructive activities carried on there by a band of determined and selfless workers. Thus the psychological ground was being slowly prepared for more than two decades. In a way the psychological preparation has been going on in India since centuries, where numerous saints and social reformers have preached against untrammelled individualism and Vinobaji's movement is a flowering of that long historical process, a culmination.

Several erroneous ideas are prevalent about the land situation in Koraput. An analysis of the statistics of 472 villages where land has been re-distributed, shows that the average of cultivated and cultivable waste land per capita is only 1.33 acres. Taking into consideration the hilly nature of the area, this is not much. The people are not less attached to land than peasants in any other part of the world, and are as ready to fight and murder in disputes concerning land. Most of them are peasants with a settled life. One of the obvious reasons for their taking to Podu or shifting cultivation is that the moneylenders have filched their good lands in the valleys and have thus forced them to go higher and higher up on the hill-sides.

It is difficult to assess the actual depth of understanding in each and every village in a vast movement that has reached mass proportions. It is but natural that there should be all the gradations from the highest levels of understanding and ideological maturity to the lowest levels of hard mentality, and there have been a few dozens of regressions also. It is remarkable that the percentage of backsliders has been so small. An estimate of the degree of psychological change may, however, be formed from the results of land redistribution.

LAND REDISTRIBUTION

Redistribution work was carried on during the winter and summer of 1955-56 and with one mighty effort the work in 602 out of 850 villages donated by then was completed. The villagers themselves

fixed the principles of redistribution, such as, which family was to get how much land *per capita* etc. and the Bhoodan workers helped them with advice and in technical matters. The ideal, of course, was a thoroughly egalitarian distribution with shares in all types of land, to each family according to the number of its members. A good 20% of the villages strictly adhered to this ideal. But the majority of them preferred to give some extra land to the bigger landowners, amounting from one-and-a-half to three times the per capita average in the villages. In a minority of villages, they agreed to give even more than this to persuade a few recalcitrant big owners to join them. While as mentioned earlier, here were about 20 to 30 villages which went back on their pledge and refused to have any redistribution. There were also many cases in which former big owners refused to accept the bigger than the average shares so graciously offered to them by their fellow villagers.

These cases illustrate the changes wrought in the ownership pattern and the individual sacrifices made in the process of redistribution. Though the land is redistributed with full rights of cultivation, yet its ownership does not pass to the grantee, but rests in the village community. The individual farmer cannot sell or mortgage his holding and the village community has the right and is expected to exercise it, to have periodical reconsiderations and reallotments, say every five or ten years. The Orissa Bhoodan Act, as recently amended recognises communal ownership of land in Gramdan villages.

COLLECTIVE FARMS

A certain percentage of land is generally set apart for collective farming. The average for the 472 villages in Koraput comes to just over 3% of the total cultivated land. The actual amount varies from village to village.

It may be asked, why no effort is being made to start collective farming, instead of redistributing the land? The answer is simply this, that the Indian peasant in Koraput or elsewhere is not amply equipped to handle the organisational and technical problems involved in collectivisation. So it was thought best to lay stress on equalitarian distribution, coupled with non-ownership and encourage villagers to experiment with collective or community farming on a small scale, to gather experience. Very few of the villages have as yet taken up their collective lands in right earnest, but a few results stand out. In Manpur they have been cultivating their collective lands on a share out basis since three years. The first year they got a net produce of 230 mds. of paddy, which they credited to the village fund. The next year there were heavy floods which ravaged the crops. This year they expect a good crop. In Akili starting only last year they jointly cultivated the collective land, every adult, and even child-

ren working in the fields according to his or her capacity. The grain produce was credited to the village fund while the potato crop and other vegetables were distributed to all the families on a *per capita* basis, without taking into consideration the amount of labour contributed by them. Thus, the aged and the disabled also got a fair deal.

PRINCIPLES OF RECONSTRUCTION

Vinobaji felt the need of making an early start with the reconstruction work so that the popular enthusiasm may be caught and channelised while at its highest peak. Accordingly the Sarva Seva Sangh has shouldered the task of guiding the reconstruction programme, helped by the Navajivan Mandal, a constructive organisation working mainly among the Adivasis in Orissa.

Before going into the details of the activities we may do well to clarify some of the basic approaches underlying it.

Firstly, it should be emphasised that the ultimate objective is not mere material well-being, but an all round development of human personality. It aims at creating a society of free individuals, willingly and freely working together for the common weal. So the reconstruction work is to be carried out in such a way that the villagers should first feel the necessity for any project and resolve to shoulder such responsibility as they can and the Sangh will help them to carry out their resolve. They should feel that it is their own decisions that are being carried out, something is not being bestowed on them from above. The Sangh is to be there as a guide and a helper, not as an overriding authority. The measure of the success of the programme is not merely in the physical targets achieved or the amount of money spent, but in the degree in which it succeeds in drawing out the capacities of self-help, initiative, co-operation and responsibility in the people.

Keeping the above objects in view and taking into consideration the realities and resources, a broad order of priorities was decided upon in which the various items of development work were to be taken up. The first ones were (1) providing the landless who had now got land with bullocks and implements (2) organisation of Co-operative Stores etc., (3) irrigation and (4) Khadi. The next to follow were, (1) education, (2) village industries, (3) sanitation and health etc. An effort was to be made to arouse the people in such a way that any one of the programmes taken up will get started on as wide a basis as possible over the whole area, thus giving it the shape of a popular movement. Thus, for instance, more than thirty co-operative Stores were started within a short period of two months.

One of the fundamental principles of the Bhoodan movement is total social security, security for each and every individual in society.

Gramdan lays the foundations for the construction of just such a social order in which the interests of all will be in harmony. So, after the abolition of conflicting interests in land, it is also essential that new industries and sources of employment be developed in such a way that they do not create conflict of interests in the system, that one's employment does not encroach upon the means of livelihood of another.

The Sarvodaya idealists are not opposed to scientific technology as such and in fact Vinobaji has welcomed the harnessing of atomic energy as he hopes that it will help in decentralising the industries by providing an abundance of electrical power. They are also not wedded to such utterly austere standards of life as people imagine.

In Orissa the rural population is one of the poorest in India and perhaps Koraput is the poorest district. It has been estimated that the average income of a rural family in Koraput is somewhere in the region of 225 rupees per annum. The desperate need of the moment is to increase their real income at least three times in the shortest possible time to make life just bearable for them.

But when faced with the stark realities of the situation we find that modern conventional technology can be of very little help. The people are undernourished and have lost any skill of the fingers that they had. For them, technological progress has stopped centuries ago. For them we have to invent a new technology that will take into consideration the disused state of their hands and minds and slowly put skill back into them so that ultimately their awakened intellect takes over command. We are forced to realise that there is no other alternative but to adopt the technology of small tools developed by the Gandhian research workers.

THE PROGRESS OF RECONSTRUCTION

The Sarva Seva Sangh does not aspire to take up the responsibility for each and every village received in Gramdan. That responsibility rests ultimately with the people and the Government. It has taken up the responsibility for the villages in Koraput, Ganjam, Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts only. The areas have been divided into seven blocks, five in Koraput and one each in Ganjam and the Balasore-Mayurbhanj areas. The areas are further subdivided into centres, each serving a group of 15-20 Gramdan villages. 45 such centres have been opened. Each centre is in charge of a worker who looks after all the developmental activities in the region. There are in all 120 workers including 45 lady-workers working under the programme. Budgets and plans have been drawn up and funds obtained from the Government of India, the Orissa Government, the Sarva Seva Sangh and the Gandhi Nidhi.

But the actual progress of work has not been dictated by the cut and dried schedules and estimates of the budget, but has been moulded by the experiences gained from day-to-day and the objective realities of the situation as they were more and more clearly grasped.

Take for instance, the problem of irrigation. The people are extremely water-conscious and almost every other village has a pet irrigation scheme of its own, which is often a good hunch. Proposals were first submitted for small projects to irrigate a total of 5,000 acres in the first year. But it was soon apparent that it was hazardous to launch out on schemes without proper surveys and estimates. With the hands of the government departments full, enough surveyors or overseers were not available. So it was decided to open a training centre to train up a cadre of surveyors and engineers. The training classes have opened with twenty students who will do class-room work and field work for alternating periods of about three months, that actual construction work gets as early a start as possible. Then broad surveys of the countryside have revealed that soil conservation work is in same ways as important and urgent as irrigation schemes. So more emphasis will be laid henceforth on soil conservation and an effort made to make the villagers erosion-conscious.

AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT

The first programme taken up after the redistribution of land was distribution of bullocks to the former landless. 1091 pairs were distributed to 1,593 families in 200 villages, this year. In many villages, to which bullocks could not be supplied, the villagers helped each other with the existing bullocks. As cow-keeping is very indifferently done in Koraput, there is an overall shortage of bullocks in the district. While it is planned to distribute a similar number of bullock-pairs this year also, steps are being taken to educate the people in good live-stock management and a cattle breeding centre has been opened.

A survey of the areas was jointly undertaken by the Director of Agriculture, Orissa, the Joint Director of Agriculture, Madhya Pradesh and the District Agriculture Officer, Koraput, and they have formulated proposals for a programme of agricultural development. According to this, six model agricultural farms will be started in the first instance, where improved methods will be first tried out under local conditions and then taught to trainees from the villages.

So far it has been possible to start only two such centres due to the lack of personnel. One plant nursery has also been started.

Agricultural implements worth a lakh of rupees donated by the Tata Steels have been distributed in the villages.

It is to be noted that when part of the lands in a village is brought under irrigation the villagers agree to share the fields among all the families.

Gramdan opens up unlimited possibilities for crop planning, soil conservation and land management in general but we will have to wait a while for concrete results in these directions.

CO-OPERATIVE STORES

In order to put an end to exploitation by moneylenders and traders, that has incidentally reached unbelievable proportion in Koraput and Ganjam, and also to put the villagers in control of their economic activities, stores were started in the villages on a co-operative basis. The villagers contributed a minimum of rupee one and eight annas per family in shares etc. and the Sarva Seva Sangh advanced upto ten times the capital thus collected. Forty-seven stores have thus been opened. The total share capital collected exceeds Rs. 2,500/-. The amount advanced by the Sangh so far is Rs. 14,447. The total turnover by the end of May '56 exceeded Rs. 8,000.

The stores will help to make the villagers conscious of their economic plight. Now for the first time they will have an idea of the exports and imports from their villages and will be prompted to control them. The stores will also serve as marketing centres for the surplus produce of the villages and extend credit facilities, thus developing into multi-purpose co-operative Societies. Steps are being taken to organise a central co-operative Union for the entire Gramdan area.

The village stores are not as yet formally registered as co-operative societies and money has been advanced to them on good faith. These are often managed by totally illiterate villagers, yet the management has been remarkably honest and efficient and the losses sustained so far have been insignificant.

INDEBTEDNESS

The extortions practised by the moneylenders, especially in Koraput and Ganjam, had been on an unbelievable scale. The unjust debts piled on the peasants are enormous and efforts are being made to scale them down through negotiations. It is a happy augury that some moneylenders have agreed to scale down or write off debts. Some have even let go lands they had held on mortgage for decades. But most of them are as yet hostile to Gramdan and have ceased extending loans to the villagers. Now the village stores are stepping into the breach by extending credit on bonded produce.

The only stable solution to the problem of indebtedness and insecurity is a village insurance scheme with annual premium contributions from every family that will cover cases of crop failure, accidents, fire, sickness etc. These will be integrated into larger units that will be able to cover cases of major disaster affecting a whole village or a region. Vinoba has this in mind as one of the ultimate modes of utilisation of Sampattidan. The Sampattidan movement has also made good progress in the Koraput district, with a promised total annual contribution valued at Rs. 27,400.

Villagers labouring on development projects are encouraged to save and pool a part of their earnings to build up a village fund. They are readily accepting the idea.

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

The villagers are eager to take up spinning etc. but an early start could not be made due to the lack of accessories. A workshop for manufacturing charkhas and other accessories has been established at Rayaghada and is turning out about 300 charkhas monthly. 800 kisan charkhas have already been distributed in the villages and it is hoped that about 2,000 of them will be distributed by the end of the financial year. Cotton seeds have also been distributed.

It is proposed to encourage the villagers to take collective vows to have Khadi cloth only in their villages after, say, one year. Since more than a decade Khadi has taken root in some villages in the Koraput district. One who runs may see and marvel at the facility with which even teenagers have taken to the processes. It is immediately evident that the spinner families are better clad than the rest. Khadi has helped them increase their standard.

Oil-pressing, pottery, soap-making, tanning and such other village industries will be gradually introduced and pilot schemes have already been started. These will be organised on a production for local consumption basis and only the surplus, if any, will be marketed.

EDUCATION

Though the problem of formal education has been shelved for a couple of years, yet in a real sense the whole scheme is one mighty educational effort. Through running their Grama Sabhas, managing their stores, working on engineering projects and in many other ways the people are learning things and their mental horizon is being widened as never before, because every scheme is based on the people's understanding and co-operation. Youngmen from the villages will be also trained in agriculture, cattle-breeding, carpentry,

smithy, pottery etc. at the various farms and centres and will carry on the activities in their own villages. It is proposed to even mobilise youngmen and women into labour corps to work on the various projects, living a disciplined life in camps and having a few hours of cultural and intellectual programmes. One such camp has been very successfully organised.

The urge for literacy is growing. Vinobaji laid great stress on it at every meeting in Koraput. Night schools for adults are being conducted by the workers. There are very few schools in the Koraput district. Literacy is only 5%. Education has to be provided for every child in every village and this will be according to the Basic system. A full-fledged attack on the front will be made only when the schemes that are to mitigate the desperate economic situation are well launched on their way. The immediate need is to ensure two square meals to everybody. Meanwhile efforts will be made to get "one-hour schools" started in every village to provide the modicum of the three Rs. to the children. Villagers undergoing the various vocational trainings will also be taught the three Rs., so that they can start the ferment in their villages and run these one-hour schools.

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The Adivasis have their own languages. Kandha, Saura, and Gadba are the important ones in Koraput. It is proposed to publish small booklets in these languages which will be useful for both children and adults. It is also necessary that the workers learn their languages to enter into their hearts. A manual in the Kandha language has been published while others are under preparation.

RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENT

The laboratory has been set up with two trained scientists. They are engaged at present on researches on the utilisation of forest products and testing of materials used in engineering projects. The research facilities will have to be extended by stages to ultimately cover the needs of all the branches of activities. Ultimately it will be possible to integrate the whole structure, down from the basic schools, upto the research institutes, into a full fledged rural university.

HEALTH AND SANITATION

The Adivasis have a surprising sense of neatness and beauty but are the victims of some insanitary personal habits mainly due to ignorance and poverty. Many do not even have enough clothing for a daily change, and wash. It will be easy enough to teach them better habits when they become a little better off.

Medical facilities in the areas are few and far between. Yaws are widely prevalent in the Ganjam-Koraput tract. Three doctors are at

present employed on a campaign against yaws. Four sisters are working as injectors. They have treated and cured about 5,000 cases. Survey is being made as to the incidence of the disease in the area after which an intensive effort will be made with the help of volunteer doctors to eradicate the disease from the area within a short time.

All the lady-workers also help the villagers with advice, nursing and common medicines in cases of common ailments.

PROHIBITION

It is generally believed that it is impossible to make the Adivasi give up drink. But in point of fact thousands of them had given it up during the national movements. Vinobaji also laid great stress on it and the state Government agreed to enforce it in Koraput and Ganjam from April, 1956. It was already in force in Balasore. In Koraput prohibition has had phenomenal success and all the government officials are agreed that there are very few cases of contravention. The reconstruction workers are also seeing to it that the villagers accept it whole-heartedly. Liquor had been a very convenient tool in the hands of the exploiters and its eradication will liberate the people in more than one way.

V

GRAMDAN—IMPLICATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES*

D. R. GADGIL

The concept of Gramdan has emerged and emphasis has progressively shifted from Bhoodan to Gramdan. I heartily welcome this development; because, while I still hold that in a dynamic situation Bhoodan would prove inappropriate, I can visualise Gramdan being a powerful instrument of initiating the rapid socio-economic changes, in bringing about which there appears general agreement in the country.

The first point to be made in this regard is that Gramdan cannot be and should not be looked upon as a mere extension of Bhoodan. The slogan of both may be the same but whereas Bhoodan appeals to you in the name of the landless to part with a little bit as an act of charity, Gramdan requires you to put your all in the pool and abide by the common decision. Further, the contention that in Bhoodan "*dan*" is to be interpreted not as charity but as equal distribution was never proved in practice to be true and was difficult to accept even conceptually. With Gramdan, there is no difficulty in accepting this definition of the term "*dan*." However, it requires to be examined whether there are any difficulties in the way of its possible operation, in practice, in that direction.

In the first instance, then, how could Gramdan affect the position of the money-lender-trader classes vis-a-vis village society? The act of Gramdan, by itself, in no way, immediately or directly affects the position of the trader-money-lender class. Only to the extent that the operations of the money-lenders had been based on mortgages of land either with a view to its ultimate acquisition or merely for greater security of credit, Gramdan involving the transfer of individual rights in land to the village community as a whole would affect them. However, the findings of the Rural Credit Survey indicate that in recent years the extent of mortgage credit in the countryside has decreased considerably. To the extent further, that though there was no explicit charge on land or a mortgaging of it, a money-lender operated in the light of the possibility of selling out the land by the cultivator and was persuaded thereby to give credit liberally, Gramdan would lead to its contraction. However, the total effect of this consideration is not likely to be large. As a result of tenancy and aliena-

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tion legislation the free market in land has almost disappeared in most States and the land value basis of credit has been considerably narrowed.

The trader and his operations are not directly affected at all by Gramdan. Gramdan, by itself, cannot lead to community action in relation to credit, marketing and processing. Gramdan may create an atmosphere favourable to community efforts, but they do not automatically follow on Gramdan and would require somebody showing initiative and taking positive action. In this context, a difficulty is likely to arise which will have to be faced by all Gramdan workers. Barring exceptional cases, the combined resources of a Gramdan Community in money or management ability, etc., are not likely to be large enough for them, unaided, to dispense with the services of money-lender-traders. Therefore, those who preach Gramdan and bring it about must consider it as, inevitably and logically, their own responsibility to provide the needed additional resources for at least a period from outside. This means that the co-operative development and technical improvement programmes which are being advocated elsewhere must be operated in the Gramdan villages and in this task the initiative and even the full responsibility, in the early stage, must be taken by the Gramdan workers. Reports from some areas where Gramdans are supposed to have taken place but where little has been done for loosening the hold of traders and money-lenders and the disruptive effects of such a state of affairs indicate that this point is not irrelevant to the developing situation. These observations mean that the act of Gramdan by itself will not bring about the desired change in relation to the position of money-lender-traders and that this problem has to be tackled specifically as part of the reorganization following Gramdan, at least in the initial stage, by the Gramdan workers themselves.

Gramdan should directly affect the position of the other dominant class of the big landlords and cultivators. Without the active co-operation and consent of the more substantial landowners and cultivators in the village, no Gramdan can come about. Therefore, the statement that a Gramdan has been completed should be held equivalent to the statement that the top strata of cultivators and landowners in the village have voluntarily withdrawn from their entrenched position. What are the important results which could flow from this act of voluntary surrender? In this context also it is necessary to distinguish between what will necessarily happen following the propaganda leading to Gramdan and what must take place if Gramdan is to prove a powerful instrument of change.

With the history of Bhoodan behind it the initial redistribution after Gramdan is likely to emphasise the aspect of giving a minimum of area of land to the landless and the smallest holders. It has already been the experience that such redistribution at the initial stage may

be largely notional and may not affect materially the position of the large holders and the general pattern of command over resources in the village. That the initial step is not far reaching may not necessarily be a bad thing. As long as the initial step is no more than the first of a series too much importance need not be attached to it. However, this implies that in the Gramdan village a force has been created which will bring about gradually all the desired changes. In the context of land management these changes may be considered under two broad heads. The first of these is consolidation. The technical need for consolidation is universally granted. At the same time, it is general experience that consolidation is a somewhat slow and expensive process. Gramdan can in no way obviate the need for the consolidation effort. Will it make the effort cheaper or more expeditious? The theoretically absolute right in relation to redistribution of land that the Gramdan village community may be supposed to acquire as a result of Gramdan should prove an extremely important asset in the process of consolidation. Both the expenses and the time required should be capable of material reduction because of this in the Gramdan village. But the effort at consolidation will not follow automatically because of Gramdan. The Gramdan community must be aware of the technical, long-term need for consolidation and must have a functioning authority which will exercise the powers and organise the effort needed for it.

Perhaps even more important than consolidation is how the concept of the ceiling operates and what is done to the uneconomic holdings in the Gramdan villages. In this matter also there is no step or action that is inevitably connected with Gramdan or which logically follows from it. The attitude of Bhoodan workers towards common production and co-operative farming has become more favourable in recent years; but even today the ultimate objectives regarding, for example, the organisation for production do not seem to be clearly visualised. The usual questions regarding the proportion of individual and of common or co-operative farming or other effort, the maximum and minimum sizes of individual and co-operative holdings, measures to prevent departure from accepted norms in these matters, will all have to be faced in the Gramdan villages also. The Gramdan villages will have only one advantage in this regard. They need not immediately attempt all that is thought as being ultimately desirable and they need not now finalise details of the ultimate picture. However, the broad outline must, in any case, be determined immediately and, further, provision must be made to see that the first tentative efforts are followed by continuous progress towards the end objectives.

There is undoubtedly a great deal in the notion that what is accepted willingly and with understanding would give a firm and lasting basis to change. The stages by which a certain pattern is brought

about may be few or many or may take long or short time and there may be differences in the stages and the pace at which in the various Gramdan villages change is proceeding. Some variation even in the ultimate pattern could be visualised and it would be one of the merits of this approach that it gives you scope for considerable experimentation ; it is also obviously implied in it that there would be close adjustment of the various stages and experiments to local circumstance and need. The circumstances would not merely be economic but also social and psychological and it may be necessary to look to and make adjustments for the latter to the same degree as for the former. When all this is said, it would still remain true that the general direction in which the Gramdan villages proceed will have to be clearly formulated. The idea thus brought out in the context of land management that each Gramdan village is a unit which is committed to a programme of consolidating land and creating units of efficient operation of it (however, interpreted) and that this programme will proceed by stages and will be adopted to the needs of the situation in each village all implies continuous operation of an organization or authority in each Gramdan village. At each stage of further step in consolidation or creation of new efficient units, the Gramdan authority will have to exercise its rights regarding resumption and redistribution of land. A gradual process would be possible only if such rights continued to exist and were actively exercised. This again means that the Gramdan authority could not at any stage resign its powers or create permanent vested rights against itself. If, therefore, at the initial or at any specific stage in the redistribution of land, possibilities of later distribution were closed, the elasticity of operation and the possibility of progress in the Gramdan village would also be closed. All this could be summed up perhaps best by saying that a Gramdan village in which resumption and redistribution of land are not continuous active possibilities, would cease in fact to be a Gramdan village.

The formulation arrived at above has far-reaching results. For example, it implies that the ordinary laws of tenancy operating in a State would not operate in a Gramdan village. The whole elasticity of the Gramdan would be lost if tenancy laws were held applicable. The act of Gramdan must be held thus to involve not only complete surrender of existing rights in relation to land by all types of present holders but also the decision not to alienate any of the surrendered rights to any person, family or organisation at any time in the future. This suggests that the individual cultivator in a Gramdan village would be, vis-a-vis the Gramdan authority, in a position similar to that of a tenant-at-will. Such a status would be agreed to by members of the Gramdan community only if it was guaranteed that in a Gramdan village, none of the usual disabilities to tenants-at-will continue to operate. For example, it would have to be guaranteed by the Gramdan community that each holder who cultivated independently had fully adequate credit and supplies, whatever the status and size of hold-

ing and that even though he held no permanent or long-term rights in any particular piece of land his economic security was looked after by the community at least as well as if he held a piece of land or property permanently. Existence of a continuously functioning right of resumption and redistribution is thus seen to involve the obligation of looking after permanently the economic interest and security of all constituents of the Gramdan village; and this would apply not only to present constituents but also to their dependents, successors in title, etc. Perhaps even this is too narrow a definition of the responsibility. The fact that one of the first acts of the Gramdan village is usually to vest some land in the landless in the village shows that the responsibility shouldered by the Gramdan Community is not confined to those who are holders of land today. The responsibility extends to non-owners as well as to owners, to non-agriculturists as well as to agriculturists. It covers all of them. The Gramdan village, in fact, takes responsibility for the economic security and welfare of all who form members at any one time, of the Gramdan, community.

Let us examine this further by reference to some of the usual difficulties experienced in the operation of tenancy laws. One of these relates to alienability of land and the raising of credit. The Gramdan community is essentially the superior holder of land. As no other holder within the Gramdan village would have any transferable rights, he would have no right to create a charge on any piece of land. Therefore, to the extent that resources could be had only through creation of a charge on land resources such credit could be raised only by the community and by no individual or institution within it. Is this to be taken to mean that, for example, intermediate and long-term credit would have to be raised by the village community itself and would it logically follow that, in this instance, the village community and the borrowing authority for this purpose would have to be identical? It does not seem absolutely necessary to accept this somewhat inconvenient position. With the current programme of land reform in India the land mortgage basis of long-term agricultural credit is more and more receding into the background. Both the alienability of land and determinancy of the value of land are no longer generally existent. Therefore, land values and long-term land credit would not be as inter-connected in the future as in the past. Long-term land credit related to specific approved investments and leading to expected improvements in production from which the credit is liquidated, would tend to be divorced from alienability of land in the future. Thus conditions outside the Gramdan villages would not differ materially from those within Gramdan villages. So that not necessarily the Gramdan community itself but any co-operative operated by a body of producers within the village which had an investment programme should, in the particular context, be able to obtain credit without a mortgage on land. Though it may well happen that where the investment is in land or in permanent structures imbedded in it the creditor may

require the additional guarantee of the Gramdan authority as the ultimate superior holder of land. Thus in normal operations a Gramdan village may not suffer any handicap. However, the discussion makes clear that the fact of Gramdan does raise important questions regarding not only legal provision but also regarding division of functions, etc., between the Gramdan authority and other associations like co-operatives within or outside the village. It also emphasises that a large part of the development investment will have to be undertaken on a community or co-operative basis and could not be left to individual operators.

A number of difficulties of the existing tenancy laws arise in connection with enforcement. These difficulties have their origin in the overwhelming influence of the top strata among cultivators, who might also be substantial landowners. Legal provisions regarding levels of rent become ineffective as these landlords are able to enforce payment of the traditional rent in spite of the law. In view of the competition for land among tenants, legal rent becomes ineffective except against absentee landlords or perhaps landlords not belonging to the dominating cultivating communities. Similarly, security of tenure guaranteed by law loses meaning when the landlords are in a position to obtain voluntary surrenders of land from their tenants.

In a Gramdan village such problems should not arise, initially, because of the voluntary giving up of their superior position by the big cultivators and later, because of the continuous operation of a phased programme of equitable distribution and efficient productive organisation in the Gramdan village. Obviously, if the initial redistribution is nominal and no phased programmes operate, abuses flowing out of the dominant position of a small number of big cultivators will not cease merely because at one time an act of Gramdan took place.

There are other problems of tenancy arrangements which may be said to be connected with the life-cycle. These arise out of the variety of circumstances which tend to create a break, for a long or short period, in the cultivating operations of a family. There is the common case of the death, etc., of the head of the family leaving only males who are minors and who are unable to carry on cultivation. Or, consider the case of a family from which one or more adults have migrated for employment outside the village while one carried on the cultivating business and due to death or incapacity of the non-migrant adult the village business is interrupted while the migrant adults may not be in a position to return to the village immediately, though they intend to return after a period. In all such cases, for long or short periods, the family might desire to vest its cultivating rights temporarily in some other person. It may, as in the case of a minority, also find it necessary to have some income from the property during this

period. A problem of subletting arises in these cases. On the other hand, when the minor is able to look after the farm or the migrants return to the village for permanent settlement there arises the problem of resumption of cultivation. Subletting and resumption have, therefore, been processes for which some provision has always had to be made in all tenancy laws. At the same time it has been found that it is not easy to make a provision without serious possibilities of creating a class of pure rent receivers on the one hand and complete tenants-at-will on the other. Gramdan may be able to deal with this problem successfully. It will do this on the two-fold assumption made above that (1) in a Gramdan village resumption and redistribution are always possible and to some extent, frequently take place; and (2) that the Gramdan authority which is the superior holder of all lands and natural resources also shoulders the responsibility of adequately providing for the economic need of all members of the village community for the time being. On this basis the Gramdan authority should have no difficulty in meeting the problems of subletting and resumption. For, if for whatever reason a family in the village is no longer able to continue cultivating operations the lands in question will be available to the Gramdan authority for being allotted to other persons or uses. At the same time when, for whatever reason, the earning capacity of a family at work is impaired it would be the responsibility of the Gramdan authority to provide appropriate work and/or relief to that family. Similarly, when in any family minors grow up and become capable of doing work or some temporary migrants return, provision of land or other type of work would have to be made for them by the Gramdan authority. Thus the dual responsibility of keeping all resources under active productive operation all the time and of finding work and sustenance for all members of the community, which the Gramdan authority shoulders could be carried out only with a full control over productive resources of the village as a whole.

Continuous operation of powers of resumption and redistribution emerges as the key factor in all contexts. Resumption or redistribution may take place both at long intervals in a large measure and continuously in a small measure. In relation to changes in circumstances of individual families there would be continuous but marginal adjustments. On the other hand, in relation to important transformations made necessary by changes in ideas or through reaching limits of important phases of a long-term programme or by reason of the need to introduce new techniques or undertake new common ventures, the operation may have to cover simultaneously almost all the village resources and may bring about very substantial changes. With this view of the functioning of the Gramdan authority, the tenancy difficulties discussed above will get dealt with as parts of the continuous adjustment process.

It will be realised that this formulation of the responsibilities and functions of the Gramdan authority implies interest on its part not only in agriculture but also in economic activity other than agricultural. As manager of land and of the cultivator's economy in general the Gramdan authority will have to concern itself with the fodder, fuel and forest resources connected with the village and with their management. As the authority proceeds to take its responsibility of providing work more and more seriously, it will find it necessary to enter the field, for example, of organisation of village industries, as this will be the area in which employment for most of the labour outside agriculture in the village will have to be found. This will be in addition to its activities relating to improving techniques and in every way improving the utilisation of land and natural resources. All this will link up not only with the general problem of organisation and development of rural industry but also of increased capital formation in connection with agriculture and such matters as development of communications, the provision of housing, the provision of overhead facilities such as water or power supply. The Gramdan authority will thus come to have an overall interest in all economic activities in the village. It may be that in many of these contexts the Gramdan authority will not operate directly but through common or co-operative organisations set up for specific purposes. In fact, experience may reveal that it may be best for the Gramdan authority to confine itself to the role of the superior holder and planner and co-ordinator, leaving all individual activities including agricultural production, marketing, processing, etc., to separate organisations specifically formed.

However, this wider concept raises urgently and in an acute form the problem of defining the relation of the Gramdan village to the rest of the society in general and to Government of the State in particular. It has been made clear above that the Gramdan village will have to be placed outside the scope of most of tenancy and land reform legislation of the State. In many other ways, such as in dealing with the Revenue, Police, Forest, Agricultural, Industries or Co-operative Departments the special position of the Gramdan village may have to be recognised in law and in administrative practice by the authorities of the State. But this can be done only if Gramdan represents a worthwhile social experiment. Therefore, while recognising in many ways the privileged position of the Gramdan village, the State will, in fairness to itself and to the society in general, have to insist that the experiment is conducted properly and moves continuously in the right direction. For this purpose there will have to be a clear definition of the ultimate objectives of the experiment, the direction in which it keeps on moving, the pace at which it moves and the persons or organisations responsible for ensuring a minimum performance. In this connection reference may be made to a notion much talked of, the notion of *Gram Sankalpa*. It is often said that Gramdan operates with a *Sankalpa* and the *Gram Sankalpa* representing the views of the vil-

lagers and their autonomous decisions should be unguided and unfettered. It is also often said that this should be connected with a minimum of organisation. Whatever the spiritual or ethical values of these ideas, it has to be clearly recognised that in terms of socio-economic policy such claims on account of *Gram Sankalpa* cannot be recognised. It was indicated earlier how Gramdan may prove abortive at early stage, so that nothing happens after an initial perfunctory redistribution of land. To treat a village in this position as a Gramdan village outside the operation of tenancy and other laws will be a travesty of socio-economic policy. Therefore, it is far from sufficient for being so treated that at one time there has been Gramdan. Also, in no case can the State divest itself of its overall responsibility which, in this case will mean the right and duty to assess progress periodically, to issue directives and, finally, if necessary, even to suspend, supersede or extradite—extradition meaning in this context removal from the roster of Gramdan villages.

Gramdan, then is an unprecedented movement with many and complex implications and very great potentialities. Wherever the Gramdan experiment is conducted in a substantial measure very special legal and administrative provisions would be required to give it a fair trial; these could not be made perfect within a short time, and a large amount of sympathetic experimentation could alone prove what is required. But from the outset it is also of the utmost importance that both Government and those responsible for the Gramdan movement realise fully the total implications of the effort and the experiment and are ready to carry out the related responsibilities.

SECTION X

**RURAL SOCIETY IN
TRANSITION - MAJOR TRENDS**

I

TRENDS IN RURAL CHANGE*

S. THIRUMALAI

The main changes are noticed in the caste, the joint family system and village administration through *Panchayats* which together formed the base of the old social edifice. The rise of internal markets, assisted by the extension of railways and roads, and the expansion in foreign trade of agricultural commodities transformed the old self-sufficient economy of the village based on barter into a market economy, based on cash. With the gradual urbanisation of the village, the rigidity of the division of labour among the community softened. The old caste barriers to economic mobility have been slowly giving way. The expansion of towns, the diversification of employment opportunities in trade and services and the glamour and attractions of city life have created a steady drift towards the city. This has been responsible for loosening the hold of the joint family system on the members. There has also been continuous drain on the intelligentsia among the

*Reproduced from Post-War Agricultural Problems and Policies in India, by S. Thirumalai, pp. 224-226.

rural population. The two World Wars drew from the village population into military service hundreds of thousands who imbibed a new outlook on life. After their return from the distant theatres of war they have added a new ferment to the social urges of the rural community, already seething with discontent under the pressure of poverty. The advent of freedom with a new promise and hope, the acceleration of economic and social reform measures, resulting in the abolition of large landed estates and the protection of the rights of the tenants and labourers, the political enfranchisement of the vast population under adult suffrage, have all widened the horizon of economic standards in the village and have further complicated the problems of adjustment and of devising a new social order for the villages.

Social Customs :—The significant among the factors of change in the social order have been the rise in the age of marriage, the improved status of women, the lesser vogue of caste despotism and of *purdah*, the removal of the disabilities of sections of population under caste hierarchy and in general, the realignment of family relations. But it must however be said that while glimpses of change in outlook are noticed among the educated in the village community, in respect of social disabilities, the old order is kept intact in the observances of the privileges. Untouchability, access to places of public convenience as wells etc., and public worship were the three crucial barriers and all the three have given way under legislative compulsion and educative propaganda. The inner change of heart, which is the result of enlightened education, is yet far from achievement. In one respect no change is visible. The tanner and sweeper still live on the outermost fringe of the village, often on opposite sides, though the *Brahmin* is losing his halo and the untouchable, the stigma. The two tests of free association in a modern society are food and marriage. In the village, they are still as strong a barrier as they were and education has done nothing to weaken them. The cow is more the object of veneration, than a problem in economic improvement.

Standard of Living

In objective terms a standard of living consists of three main elements ; (1) the level of consumption or the composition of goods and services of a specific quantity and quality consumed by an individual, family or group within a given period ; (2) social services and free services, particularly those which relate to health, education and recreation, and (3) working conditions which affect not only the workers' health and earning capacity but also the size and regularity of his income. As a dynamic concept, it implies in the first place the eradication of poverty among the rural community and in the second, im-

proving the content of living of all categories of workers with regard to consumption, social and free services and conditions of work.

Examined on the basis of the above terms, it would be difficult to answer the question whether there has been an improvement in the standard of living of the rural community. While the view is often held that the rise in prices during the war period ushered in a period of prosperity, evidence is lacking as to the category of the population which was actually benefited and the extent of increase in prosperity. While a relative improvement in the standard of living of the strata of economic landholders may be accepted, the available data indicate that there has been a deterioration in the other sections of the agricultural population who form the majority.

II

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND PLANNED CULTURE CHANGE IN INDIA*

DAVID G. MANDELBAUM

The large-scale development plans which are now under way in India are, in the main plans for technological and economic change. As these plans become realised, they cannot but have effect on social organization and be affected by it. Such reciprocal influence is now being felt in various spheres of Indian society. Certain broad trends of this interaction can be stated, as they are seen in the joint family, in caste structure, in village organisation and in relation between villagers and government.

The joint family has long been the common form of family organization in India, sanctified in scripture and sanctioned in secular law. It consists typically of a set of men, related as fathers and sons, or brothers, together with their wives and children. The several nuclear families thus grouped together form a single unit of consumers and often also a single producing unit. The property of all is held in common under the trusteeship of the senior male; every male child is entitled to a share of the joint family property. All in the joint-family are fed from a single kitchen and receive money from the family purse. Among cultivators, all in the joint family work together for the family's crop.

Formation and fission go on now as they have before but the regular tendency is toward smaller joint families. Many factors are involved in this, among them the increased chances for a man to earn a living as an individual rather than as one of a joint family team, and the decreased willingness to be subservient to the head of the family or to pool both effort and income. An added impetus toward splitting the larger joint families has come about in those areas where land reform measures have been introduced.

A common feature of these measures is to set a limit to the amount of land any family which may own. Hence in these circumstances the men of a large joint family hasten to split up into nuclear families when such reform measures are brought about lest they be

*Reproduced from—"India's Villages," A collection of articles originally published by the Economic Weekly of Bombay, 13-14.

restricted to a holding uneconomical for a large family group. With formal separation there tends to be separation in fact also, at least in so far as the joint family is a producing unit. But in many cases the larger family group is a much more efficient producing unit than is the small family group. This is especially true where continuous work is required, as where ripening crops must be watched against animal and human predators and when field labour must be quickly mobilized and intensively worked, as at harvest. The larger joint family is also more apt than the smaller to be able to raise the capital necessary for implements and animals. Thus one rather unforeseen, though by no means inevitable, consequence of land reform may be a hastening of the push toward smaller families with some consequent decline in agricultural efficiency.

Caste structure has close ties with village economics. In the classical system of relations among castes in a village, the *jajmani* system, the various non-cultivating castes provided specialised services for the cultivators and received foodstuffs in return. The economic interdependence is strictly regulated by social and religious patterns which both keep the caste groups segregated in certain respects and require communication and interchange in other respects. Caste ranking and economic status were, and for many villages still are, closely linked. Caste rank is particularly manifest through ritual symbols: a group which was economically well off could acquire ritual hallmark to raise its relative position in the hierarchy.

The results of the development programmes of the last century in the fields of transportation and communication, in the spread of Western education, in the frequent switch from subsistence crops to cash crops, have all had consequences on village caste relations. But the criteria of ritual rank are not greatly changed—the eating of meat and the performance of menial services are still stigmas of lower rank—and ritual rank remains a main concern in the village. While there may be some relaxation of the taboos on inter-dining among castes there is no easing of the prohibition of intermarriage.

As the newer development programmes take effect there often is some levelling of economic differences among the villagers. The less high castes, newly advantaged, jockey for higher ritual rank and may attempt to use their new political franchise to gain both economic and ritual prerogatives for their caste.

One exception to the levelling effect of the newer development programmes must be noted. The lowest castes, those who are mainly landless labourers, often gain nothing at all from the irrigation pro-

jects and the redistribution of land. They have nothing to begin with, nothing which can be improved, no means of getting an economic start and so they remain economically as well as socially disadvantaged. The gap between them and the other villagers frequently widens rather than diminishes on account of development projects.

The changing nature of caste has effect on village social organization and on agricultural output. The social and economic systems were both relatively stable over many centuries partly because they reinforced each other. Now that both are being modified though still closely connected, changes in one may accelerate changes in the other. Thus are *jajmani* system of traditional, personal, exchange relations is being replaced by contractual, impersonal, pecuniary relations. Many cultivators who could summon sudden aid if quickly needed from among their traditional associates of other castes now can hire labour only if they have the cash. This process is a familiar one and has been going on in India for a century or more. But in recent years in full effect of the change is being widely felt.

As the rights and obligations of one village caste to another tend to lapse, so does the whole village drift away from the ceremonial order within which these reciprocal patterns were organized and reinforced. The traditional caste system provides for a division of labour, the traditional ceremonial order stipulates how and when the various divisions co-operate and are rewarded. With the loosening of the system of economic co-operation under religious auspices there is not usually available as effective a plan of village co-operation under purely economic or political auspices, and agricultural output may decline for this reason.

Governmental agencies, of both the central and the state administrations, have attempted to encourage the growth of a new social organization in the village which would be able to cope with modern problems and could make the transition from the old order to some new procedure. Legislation has been passed in some provinces and funds provided to enable village councils, *panchayats*, to be formed and to function. In name, these are the same as the traditional councils which have for centuries adjudicated disputes among villagers. In manner of composition, in function, they are very different. The members of the new *panchayat* must be elected, must electioneer; in the old, they were accorded place by universal respect and could hardly keep that respect if they pressed their claims. The old councils were arbitrary, conserving agencies whose prime function was to smooth over or settle village friction. The new *panchayats* are supposed to be innovating, organizing bodies working for changes rather than conserving solidarity.

Where they have been installed, the new *panchayats* seem generally to be off to a shaky start. There is some tendency for them to become the battleground of village factionalism. Factionalism has long been a frequent disrupter of joint village action. The traditional ceremonial order provides opportunities for the healing of factional breaks by mandatory co-operation towards common ceremonial goals. With the passing of the old ceremonial order, there is not the same rejoining of those whom factional disputes have rent asunder. And village elections may become little more than ways of crystallizing each opposing and non-co-operating faction. In some villages the new *panchayat* is less a forum for factionalism than it is an empty form set up for the satisfaction of visiting officials. In such villages the older *panchayat* continues to function much as it has before.

But as a social form, it is not felt adequate by many villagers to deal with the new economic and technological influences—the procuring of irrigation water or of fertilisers, for example—and these influences reach even to relatively remote villages. Hence there is widely in Indian villages today a process of social change from the traditional forms and orders to some other forms. The newer forms may not be those proposed by legislators and planners but they are also not, it seems probable, a mere recasting of the older social system.

III

FLUIDITY OF STATUS STRUCTURE IN INDIA*

D. N. MAJUMDAR

We have made sweeping generalisations regarding rural life and its problems. We have depicted village life as if the pattern was similar in all parts of the country. We have ignored the facts of alien invasions, different governments, varying religions and multiple levels of culture, as if they had little or no effect on our rural life. It is true that all parts of the country were not equally touched by social upheavals, invasions or conquest, but today we are becoming more and more aware of specific differences in different parts of the country. We know, however, the basic similarities in all villages and the personalities of villages as well. We know the common problems, and we also know the rough and ready prescriptions for our rural ills. What is needed in rural studies, today, is the shaping of effective scientific techniques of rural analysis to understand the problems of rural life in their wider contexts.

The status structure of our villages is in a fluid state. While still clinging to the traditional ways of eking out an income, the villager is today experiencing the impact of technology and competitive economy. Land is not in abundance, while the size of the family is on the increase. The artisan castes, no longer can secure a minimum level of living, out of their traditional occupation in the village and from the *jajmans* whom they still cater to. They either migrate to centres of greater opportunities, or live a precarious existence. More people today are in the grip of the money-lender than ever before and co-operative societies cannot as yet size up the want and poverty of the villages. The channels of rural finance have changed their course. The abolition of the *zamindari* has dimmed the halo around the heads of the high caste men. They are nervous about losing their rights—rights which they have enjoyed from time immemorial—and they are not prepared to give in without a struggle. Fighting tooth and nail they are trying to maintain their hold on the village. If they have lost some rights, they still have wealth, and that means power. Why should they not use their wealth in new ways to strengthen their position of

*Reproduced from Indian Rural Profiles, Ed. by D. N. Majumdar, pp. V-VII.

importance? So that many of them have adopted money-lending as their profession, which till now was the much-maligned monopoly of the village-Bania. The breakdown of the status relations has deprived the artisan elements of the village of concessions in kind which helped now and then to relieve their chronic distress. They still yoke themselves to the village economy but they have been caught in deep furrows.

The relationship of status factors to the acceptance of innovations in dress, food and farm practices is important in the context of social change. A number of investigations carried out in various parts of the world on farm practices, for example, 'have high-lighted farm-ownership, education, income, size of the farm and social participation as being associated with the adoption of improved farm practices.' Contacts with urban centres, and improved communications are helping adoption of innovations. Leaders in community affairs are not useful in dissemination of new farm practices. 'On the other hand innovators are not likely to be leaders in community affairs.' This is an area of study that must be given due consideration in planning and action research.

We are apt to isolate village leadership in its traditional setting. In the Indian villages of the past, leaders were born, but now in the new set-up it is not so. The frequency of leadership from sections or castes other than the dominant one, requires evaluation. Goods, today, are not necessarily delivered through the traditional leaders. The new leaders may not even be from the status groups, neither have they jumped into the scene by the spin of the coin. The social awareness of the people is the medium which fashions new leadership.

We have simplified the social structure of our country by equating it with the magic word 'caste.' Caste is no doubt a complex structure, but it is also a dynamic one. Three significant periods in caste history are worth mentioning. Caste as it was in the time of Manu, a fluid structure, flexible and mobile; vertical as well as horizontal features characterised caste as is understood in the context of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages i.e., marriages prescribed and those forbidden. This was the formulative period of the caste constitution. Caste in the medieval period became rigid and stereotyped. The rigidity encouraged fission, but circumscribed the chances of fusion. The challenge of the rigid caste system was met by religious revivalism in which sectarian and other types of castes emerged to accommodate deviants and aspirants after social status. A critical evaluation of the caste structure at this period would show the caste system as a cross between 'feudalism' and, the 'schism of the soul' to use a Toynbean phrase. Today caste-structure is fighting a battle of survival, as it were, and

is mobilising forces and factors, that were once dormant or unintegrated. The saving factors are the not-too-clear lines of demarcation among the castes, between the higher and intermediate and between the latter and lower castes. The intermediate castes most of whom are artisans, usually bridge the disparities between the two ends of the caste ladder. The new trend in caste dynamics today, is a concerted move on the part of the backward and socially non-privileged castes to rearrange themselves on a horizontal plane instead of pressing their claims for accommodation in the hierarchical ladder. The hitherto voiceless castes are becoming articulate, even vocal, and are not prepared to accept the status differentials. The new orientation in the attitude of the non-privileged castes has already made social distance ineffective in many ways. If the trend continues, and it is likely to continue, it certainly augurs well for the future of the Indian caste structure.

IV

ORGANISATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION*

PROF. D. R. GADGIL

The subject I have chosen for the address is usually discussed under the broad heading land reform or agrarian reform. There are many aspects of agrarian reform and I shall deal only with what I consider to be the core of agrarian reform in India, namely, organisation of agricultural production with particular reference to the size and structure of the unit of agricultural production.

The main constituents of the programme of agrarian or land reform currently undertaken by the State in India are classified as follows in the *Progress Report for 1953-54 of the Five Year Plan* :—

- (1) The abolition of intermediaries ;
- (2) Tenancy reforms designed :—
 - (a) To scale down rents to 1/4th or 1/5th of the produce ;
 - (b) To give tenants permanent rights subject to the landlord's right to resume a minimum holding for his personal cultivation within a limited time ;
 - (c) To enable tenants (subject to the landlord's right of resumption for personal cultivation) to acquire ownership of their lands, on payment of moderate compensation to the landlord spread over a period of years ;
- (3) Fixing of ceilings on holdings ;
- (4) Re-organisation of agriculture including the consolidation of holdings, the prevention of fragmentation and the development of co-operative village management and co-operative farming.

Many of the items included in the above have been subjects of attention and activity on the part of governments for many decades past. However, a number of important elements are of recent introduction and the programme has begun to look like an integrated

*Presidential Address, Fifteenth Annual Conference, the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics.

attempt only within the last few years. An important feature which has received emphasis only since the attainment of independence is the abolition of intermediaries, popularly regarded as equivalent to the abolition of zamindari.

While emphasising the primary importance of the abolition of zamindari it is necessary to remember that, in India, it affects, in the main, the distribution of the total agricultural product and not the size and organisation of the unit of agricultural production.

This is because, in the first instance, the abolition of intermediaries does not mean the break up of large farms or farming estates or the redistribution of land and secondly because, even if this had been a part of the programme, there are, in fact, with the exception of a small number of regions, no large farming estates in India. The very description of the reform as abolition of intermediaries, emphasises this aspect of the redistribution of the product and reduction of the burden on the actual cultivator. It is conceived of essentially as establishing, as far as possible, a direct relation between the actual tiller of the soil and the State.

Tenancy reform or tenancy legislation has a much wider sphere of operation than legislation for the abolition of intermediaries.

Tenancy reform also, it will be obvious, does not affect the size and shape of the agricultural holding. It brings about, in the main, a redistribution of the total produce in favour of the tenant and also gives him a sense of security regarding the future which should react favourably on the economic and technical operation of the tenant cultivator. However, there is one important difference between tenancy reform and the abolition of intermediaries. The latter is, for the most part, a once-for-all operation; the former, on the other hand, has not only continuous effect but has further to adapt itself constantly to a changing situation. In consequence, though tenancy legislation may not operate directly on the unit of agricultural production, the framing of tenancy legislation is always influenced by total land policy including policy relating to the size and structure of the unit of agricultural production. In India, tenancy legislation has to concern itself with problems such as those of sub-letting or of the alienation, transfer or inheritance of land; and all of these have relation with objectives of policy relating to the unit of agricultural production.

The fixing of ceilings on holdings is likely to effect the size of the unit of agricultural production much more directly than either the abolition of intermediaries or tenancy reform. Before proceeding further I may note that the omission to distinguish clearly between the ownership holdings and the cultivating holdings leads often to a con-

fusion in thinking and exposition of the subject of land reform in India.

The immediate effect of the adoption of a ceiling for the future, on size of the production unit would, on the other hand, be negligible, except to the extent that it would encourage actual or notional division of existing large holdings among family members so as not to be affected early by the operation of the legislation. The long-term effects are problematical and would depend on the extent to which the existing or future situation otherwise favoured the formation of very large holdings.

Even the comparatively large estate of Kashmir and Telengana do not or did not contain elements of direct cultivation large enough for redistribution to effect sensibly the problem of the small peasant holding, in even restricted areas. Elsewhere the contrasts are much less glaring. The concept of the ceiling, if it is to be used in India must, therefore, be different in content and operation from that in countries with large landlord estates, plantations or latifundia.

The concept of the economic holding or a minimum holding called by any name, like the concept of the ceiling, can form the basis of an immediate operation of reorganisation or can be confined to setting a limit to future transactions. In the latter alternative it may act as an effective means of preventing a worsening of the existing situation and may partly even help to improve it gradually in the future. These effects will, however, become apparent only slowly over a series of years and a limit for the future cannot help towards reorganisation, if the existing situation in itself is extremely unsatisfactory. A minimum holding or a floor has not been used in any State in India yet for bringing about immediate reorganisation of production units in lands included in units below the minimum size.

Consolidation as practised in India affects powerfully the internal organisation of a holding, though not usually its total size. The process of consolidation may lead to some saving in the land surface used for such purposes as boundaries or roads and may thus enable formation of a pool of land for specific common purposes. But the saving effected in this way is not likely to yield substantial acreage for distribution among existing holders. Co-operative farming or co-operative village management are yet chiefly in the stage of thought. What little action has been taken is experimental and nowhere has any legislation been formulated or contemplated which bases itself on the formation of co-operative farming units for at least a part of state policy relating to land management.

Legislation on land reform is essentially a matter for governments of States. Therefore, the programme is usually framed in the context

of particular problems of each State. The activity of the National Planning Commission affords the chief occasion and instrument for integrating policies of different State Governments and for formulating a common Indian policy. Considerable importance, therefore, attaches to the views regarding land policy contained in the first Five Year Plan. It is difficult to piece together in a consistent whole the ideas contained in the chapter on Land Policy of the Plan. The problems of the policy are divided into two aspects ; Land Management and Land Reform. It is evidently considered that there is some conflict between the two ; for, it is said that "Land Policy should include both elements but should maintain a balance between the two."

The suggested land reform policy is again not uniform ; it is evidently to change with size of land owning. The most important result is that the tenants of small and middle owners are recommended much less protection than the tenants of large owners. As middle owners are defined as owners of land upto three times the family holding the field of tenancy protection is thus seriously narrowed. The main reason given for the maintenance of a large class of tenants-at-will in this way is that otherwise movement of people from agriculture and rural areas into other occupations and towns may be seriously checked. It is fortunate that most State Governments have paid little attention to this recommendation in their legislative programme.

In relation to the landless worker the main concrete reference is to the *Bhoodan* movement. "It offers the landless worker an opportunity not otherwise open to him." This can be only interpreted as meaning that the State itself considers it neither necessary nor possible to do anything for him. It is added that the problem of the landless worker must be considered in terms of institutional changes which would create conditions of equality for all sections of the population. The essence of these changes is described as a system of co-operative village management. Co-operative village management is referred to in the Plan in other context also. For example, after having formulated the important and unexceptionable proposition that "the basic condition for increase in agricultural production is increase in the unit of management of land." This also is said to be possible only through co-operative management at the village level. With regard to the small and the middle farmers again it is recommended that they should be encouraged and assisted to develop their production and organise their activities on co-operative basis. With this emphasis on co-operation it would be expected, that co-operative organisation or co-operative village management would be described in specific detail and a programme sketched out for establishing it. The following extract summarises the ideas of the Planning Commission on co-operative village management.

"Broadly speaking, however, we envisage that the village panchayat should become the agency both for land reform and for land management in the village. In the first place it should be the body concerned with the management of land taken over from substantial owners, and also of village waste lands. The leasing of lands by small and middle owners should also be done through the panchayat and not directly. In this way the village panchayat may be able to provide cultivating holdings of economic size, at any rate for landless cultivators. The exercise of these functions would naturally lead on to the wider conception of the co-operative management of the entire land of the village and the undertaking of activities for creating non-agricultural employment in the village."

It is not necessary to comment on the above except to note that it does not deal with the problem in the comprehensive manner that might have been expected, that it is over-optimistic and also that the working model presented is obviously unsuitable and inadequate in most respects. Moreover, no concrete programme is provided for progress in the direction of co-operative village management even according to ideas contained in the Plan, beyond the Rs. 50 lakhs provided for study, training and experimentation. It would not be unfair in the circumstances, to suggest that the Plan proposes little of importance in relation to land management and that we have at present no effective programme in contemplation for dealing with what the Planning Commission itself recognises as the basic problem *viz.*, that of "the increase in the unit of management of land."

Not only is the subject treated unsatisfactorily in the Plan but also the subsequent activities of the Planning Commission and the Central Government do not indicate that it is currently held in importance or receives any special attention.

The Community Projects are supposed to be the special field of the Planning Commission and great reliance is placed on them in relation to agricultural development in the future. Not only do these Projects pay no attention to land reform or land distribution but even experimentation in relation to land management appears to find no place in them. The complete absence of any attention to it in the programme of community projects is evidenced by its not having been necessary to devote any attention to the subject in the Evaluation Report on the first year's working of these projects. And the later report of the Evaluation Organization, "Community Projects—First Reactions" contains enough evidence to show how the project authorities completely ignore land management and land reform problems. In regard to co-operative organizations we have the following comment in the Evaluation Report. "While in the very initial stages of the formulation of community plans this aspect of mutual dependence between community development and co-operative organization was

not so explicitly stated, during the course of the year increasing emphasis was placed by the Community Projects Administration on promotion of co-operative organizations" (p. 39). The co-operatives to which increasing attention is reported are still the credit, purchase and sale and other organizations and not experiments in increasing scales of land management. The putting forward more recently of agricultural extension as the panacea for all rural ills is, perhaps, a reflection of the same attitude. It appears to be considered by the Planning Commission, as by many foreign experts, that all that is required to increase agricultural production in India adequately is to arouse enthusiasm and to transfer techniques. The problem as to whether conditions in the field are such as to favour generation of enthusiasm and the acquisition and continued practice of new techniques does not evidently need prior consideration. Finally, it is reported that in some States, the Central Government, presumably acting through the Planning Commission, was responsible for persuading Governments to modify their original ideas regarding immediate operation of a ceiling on holdings. All in all, one gathers the impression that while in its theoretic formulation the Planning Commission may recognize the existence of the problem of land management it is not ready to give this recognition any immediate or concrete form.

As indicated above, the Planning Commission appears content to operate with the existing unit of agricultural production and does not propose to change in any radical manner the organization of land management and operation. The Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee also formulates its actual programme very largely in terms of the peasant farm and it does not appear to consider that a programme of reorganization involving large numbers of families and a considerable land surface is insistently called for. The experts appear to talk almost exclusively of the peasant unit and their ideas of land reform are confined mostly to abolition of intermediaries and dealing with large estates. In the circumstances, it becomes necessary to examine existing conditions carefully, especially with a view to throwing light on the strength and efficiency of the independent peasant farm as the unit of land management and agricultural production.

It is generally known that the size of the large bulk of farms in India is very small and that numbers of them cannot be called family farms in any valid sense of that term. However, no attempt is usually made to indicate with figures the dimensions of the problem. I shall, therefore, note certain salient features of the situation very briefly. My concern is with the unit of land management, the cultivated holding, and data relating to ownership of land are not relevant to my purpose. The data required are those relating to size, scale of operations and of investment, receipts and employment etc., from farming, of the independent farming units.

According to the Survey a little over half of the cultivators reported a value of gross produce of farm business lower than Rs. 400 for the year.

This then is a useful starting point of the description, that half or more of the farm units *i.e.* independent units of land management in India may have a gross produce of farm less than Rs. 600 a year. The next step is to assess the relative importance of farming activity to the farm family. In the total number of cultivators reporting less than Rs. 400 of value of gross produce during the year two divisions were made representing those with a value of gross produce below Rs. 200 and those with a value of gross produce between Rs. 200 and Rs. 400. The former formed slightly more than 29 per cent of the total cultivators and the latter group 21 per cent. Those reporting value of gross produce less than Rs 200 reported total farm expenses which exceeded their value of gross produce and those in the latter class reported total farm expenses that were on an average only about Rs. 60 less than the average value of gross produce. The average reported cash receipts from sale of crops and fodder in the two classes were about Rs. 20 and Rs. 70 respectively and both classes reported cash farm expenses that were more than Rs. 50 on an average than the average cash receipts from sale of crops and fodder. Making all allowance for errors in reporting, etc., it is clear that the cultivators included in these groups earn little, if any, net cash income through their farming activity and the main advantage derived by them from farming is some contribution in kind to family living.

In the main, however, cultivators in the lower strata have much lower values of gross produce than those in the upper.

Of the total borrowings of even the middle four deciles more than half represented borrowing for family expenditure items; for the last three deciles the corresponding proportion was almost 60 per cent. The capacity of the average cultivating family to undertake capital expenditure was obviously extremely limited. The average expenditure undertaken on all items such as bunding, reclamation, irrigation sources, implements, etc. including expenditure on repairs, maintenance and replacement was about Rs. 22 for families of the lowest three deciles and Rs. 51 for families of the middle four deciles; the corresponding amount was Rs. 311 for families of the first decile. But if this expenditure is taken together with expenditure on purchase of livestock by the respective groups of deciles and the total calculated on a per acre basis the expenditure incurred actually increases as one goes down the groups of deciles. This means that while the total outlays of the families of the middle and lower deciles are small and are known to be inadequate their burden in terms of per acre costs rules high.

It is not necessary to labour the point further. What I want to emphasise is that the size of farming business of at least half the cultivating families in India is such that it is futile to consider them as independent units of land exploitation in any plan for a developing economy. It is irrelevant in the light of the data cited above to talk in terms of family farms or economic holdings. Even the definition of basic holding of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee cannot cover these units. Therefore, a land policy for a developing economy must face up to the serious problem of the reorganization of these units. A vague recognition of these facts is seen in the general comments made in various contexts by numerous experts and Committees on the "non-creditworthy" or the "marginal and sub-marginal" groups. This recognition must become more explicit and must lead on to a realisation of the inability of any supply or credit reorganization to deal with fundamental defects of the small size and turnover of the existing basic units and of the large numbers involved in any scheme of reorganization.

There appears at present general agreement on the nature of the problem and the main approach to its solution. The following statement by the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, may be taken as representative of this.

"As agriculture is the principal occupation of the great majority of our people, it must be the first concern of the State. The abolition of the zamindari system has been the first reform and this must be expedited. But it must be remembered that this by itself is no solution of the problem. Even before this abolition a very large proportion of land was self-cultivated. An addition to it, without any further reforms, will not help much. The small subsistence farm makes progress difficult. We have to think, therefore, and think soon, of other and further steps. There should be a diversion of a part of the agricultural population to other occupations. There should be a development of cottage and small-scale industries. But essentially the problem of agriculture needs co-operative cultivation and the application of modern techniques. This does not mean necessarily mechanising agriculture all over India, though some degree of mechanisation is taking place and is desirable. But there is no escape from some form of co-operative cultivation, if we are to make agriculture progressive."

Considerations of production economy do not seem to indicate any particular figures or proportions in this context. However, data from the Rural Credit Survey may be set out to illustrate the relative proportions involved. These data relate to all the cultivated holdings in the 600 villages selected for the survey in 75 districts. The cultivators were arranged, for the purpose, in order of the size of their cultivated holdings. When so arranged it was found that the first 10 per cent or decile of the cultivators held more than 25 per

cent of the total land surface in almost all districts and held more than 30 per cent of it in 51 of the 75 districts. The first 30 per cent or three deciles taken together held more than 50 per cent of the land in almost all districts and in 48 districts they held more than 60 per cent; in no district was this proportion larger than 85 but in 6 it varied between 75 and 85 per cent. The middle four deciles held between 25 and 35 per cent of the total cultivated land in the large majority of districts. The holdings of the last three deciles included less than 10 per cent of the total cultivated land in the majority of districts; but in 27 out of the 75 districts they held between 10 and 15 per cent. Taking the broad division of cultivators into the upper half and lower half the relative size of their holdings of total land surface would be approximately 3 : 1.

The above taken together with the data relating to occupational distribution of families should give an idea of the overall dimensions of the problem. We may assume that about 60 per cent of families in rural India are cultivators in the sense of operating some cultivated land and that of the non-cultivators at least half depend for their support on agriculture and land. This gives about 80 per cent of rural families as interested in land management units and policy. We may, on the basis of data set out before, consider about half of the cultivators as having unsuitable units for independent land management, the proportion cannot at a minimum be put at less than a third of the cultivators. If we take the former figure the cultivating families together with the landless interested in reorganization, will form about half the total number of families in the countryside and, if the latter, about 40 per cent of them. Working with the data for existing distribution of cultivating holdings and assuming a transfer, because of the operation of the ceiling, of the order of 5 per cent of the total cultivated land, we have the following figures of the extent of land surface and number of families affected by reorganization: if, half the units cease to be independent about 50 per cent of rural families and 30 per cent of the cultivated land; and if, about one-third of cultivators are so affected, about 40 per cent of the rural families and about 15 per cent of the total land surface. These calculations are so broad as to be almost notional and they have been indulged in at this place only to give some idea of the dimension of the problem.

The two fundamental steps in reorganization of land management units in India are (i) redistribution of the land surface and (ii) formation of the larger consolidated units out of the pooled resources of the uneconomic units and surplus available for redistribution. The first step is an essential preliminary in almost all programmes of land improvement and agricultural development. Its importance is universally recognized in connection with the consolidation of fragmented holdings. It is, however, necessary from other points of view also.

One can view the process of consolidation in a wider context as part of the process of a rational layout of the total land surface for agricultural and other utilisation.

This task is no doubt of vast dimensions. But tasks of somewhat similar dimensions have been undertaken in other countries and the total work indicated above is not more complicated or larger than the process of consolidation undertaken currently by many State Governments in India. As I visualise it the first stage in the process will be that of determining the general layout and the second that of locating in this layout the independent farm units now fixed in location and made impartible, and the co-operative estates or farms.

The formation of larger units out of pooled land and other resources will have two aspects, one compulsory and the other voluntary. I have assumed that once the floor has been defined independent units of farm management smaller in area will not be allowed to exist. Obviously the enforcement of this must be by some sort of legislation. The measure of compulsion may vary. In the early stages the step may be initiated, as in some programmes of consolidation, only on the motion of a minimum number of families involved.

Both these tasks, that of redistributing the land surface and the formation of a small number of co-operative farms in each village are immense in extent and complexity. I would argue that not only are they a *sine qua non* of any programme of land reform but also that they are not beyond our capacity, if a sincere and concentrated effort is made. Consolidation is already generally accepted as a necessary part of the programme by everybody. The formation and proper functioning of co-operative farms is undoubtedly less generally accepted as part of universal policy and is somewhat more difficult. It is, however, equally necessary. I shall, without elaborating them, briefly state a number of reasons in favour of this proposition. In the first instance, without co-operatives, collectives or state farms an economic reorganization for operation of the existing numerous small units is impossible. Secondly, except as members of a co-operative the small farmer can never be in a position to avail himself of technical, financial or other external aid of which he stands in need, more than anybody else. The findings of all studies, whether *e.g.* of the Rural Credit Survey or the Evaluation Organization are that the bigger man gets the greater profit out of everything, government loans, co-operative finance or other financial or technical assistance of any type. One need not go into the reasons for this state of affairs; it is, however, clear from the studies that the scattered, weak units cannot really be helped effectively unless they come together. Also, as long as there is no consolidation of these weak units the balance in rural society will always remain against them. Any close study of the effects of recent land reform legislation reveals large variations in

its results, dependent chiefly on the strength of tenants and smaller holders in a locality or region. In a large number of instances legal protection and other devices prove constantly fruitless because of the strength and ingenuity of the strong. It is sad to record that large deflection of original intentions, brought about by the strong, has been reported even in the working of the Bhoodan movement. The moral is that unless the weak acquire economic strength by joining together they could never stand up and get full advantage of state policy and state legislation. The formation of a small number of co-operative farming societies of the smaller holders and the landless in each locality is a necessary step in this direction. It will be noticed that I consider redistribution as only a part of the process in the formation of the large co-operative farms. I cannot see any virtue in merely tenancy co-operatives which perpetuate the smaller units of management. Leaving scope for allotments or kitchen gardens would be welcome but the main cropping operations must be in terms of the large units. The experience elsewhere, such as with the Ejido in Mexico, emphasises importance of this.

I do not think that widespread formation of such co-operatives is an impossible undertaking. In the initial stages the progress may be slow but once the movement gathers momentum the field could be covered fairly quickly. Wide extension of the activities of State governments in rural areas together with efforts made by the Central Government in directions of Community Development and National Extension already provide comparatively large staffs in the field ; the work of this staff would come to have real meaning and purpose only if it is linked to a programme of the formation and operation of such co-operatives. Instead of chiefly conducting propaganda they would find in these co-operatives numerous local units which could prove centres of demonstration and experimentation. All governmental information and propaganda, aid and assistance could be directed towards and routed through these co-operatives. The special terms of assistance etc., laid down for these co-operatives should combine the features of the programmes envisaged in the draft outline of the Five Year Plan for the Registered Farms and for the Co-operative Farming Societies. Instead of receiving very little or nothing of government protection and assistance this step would ensure that the most disadvantaged received, as they should, the highest priority and the greatest assistance.

Therefore, in concluding I shall content myself with reiterating the following basic propositions. That in relation to land management we are following, in this country today, a policy mainly of drift ; that a programme of economic development requires more positive approach in respect of agricultural productive organization and units of land management ; that a very large number of existing cultivating holdings are extremely unsuitable for functioning as independent

units in a programme of agricultural development and that a rational layout of the land surface for its proper utilisation and a programme for the creation of large consolidated holdings are essential ingredients in any agriculture and land development policy. I may add finally that it would be impossible to deal with this problem except in terms of bold steps and very large and strenuous effort. However, these would be no more radical and strenuous than those undertaken by many other countries in analogous situations, as evidenced, for example, by the Mexican Agrarian Revolution which redistributed land in favour of the Ejidos or the transformations brought about in countries of South and East Europe both during the inter-war years and in the period after the Second World War.

V

LAND REFORMS*

DANIEL THORNER

Land reform laws ostensibly passed for the benefit of the under privileged have not basically altered India's village structure. The small minority of oligarchs have had wit and resource enough to get around these laws in which, in any event, the loopholes were so large as to give them ample manoeuvring ground. By passing themselves off, whether legally or illegally, as tillers and cultivators, the village oligarchs have gone on running India's rural life. Their un-interrupted presence in power means that the forces of the "depressor" continue to operate strongly in the countryside.

If lasting agrarian progress is to be made on a wide front, and a proper basis laid for economic development, then the central elements of India's agrarian problem will require to be dealt with in a much more direct fashion. The States will have to surrender their claim, super-landlord style, to "rent" and devise a more suitable rational basis for obtaining their revenues from land. The proprietary rights (below those of the State) of non-cultivators will have to be so abridged that the existing gap between "right holding" and cultivation-in-the-fields can be closed. Thereby the *older* basis for capital-deprived cultivation and associated low-level production can be removed and a powerful impetus given to more effective and more efficient units of production in agriculture. In the process the older concentration of power in the hands of the village minority can be reduced and the nexus of forces constituting the "depressor" broken up. All of this is a tall order. It is easier to say, abstractly, that these steps should be taken than to suggest realistic ways, under prevailing Indian conditions, of actually putting them into effect.

We may begin, however, by putting forward one fundamental principle: lands and the fruits thereof are to belong to those who do the tilling, the tillers being defined as those who plough, harrow, sow, weed, and harvest. In consequence, the income from land of non-tillers is to be brought to an end (not necessarily overnight, but within a stipulated period of time). This will result in a major redistribution of rural income, to the advantage of those who work in the fields, and to the disadvantage of those who do not. In the

*Reproduced from, "The Agrarian Prospect in India," by Daniel Thorner, pp. 79-84.

process, income arising from property rights in land will dwindle and, in the course of time, fade away and disappear.

Before discussing how this principle may best be put into effect, let us first explore some of its possible implications. Control of a very considerable amount of land will pass from rent-receivers and other soft-handed folk to tenants, crop-sharers and labourers, *i.e.* those who have long been out in the fields beneath the hot sun, working the land. It is hard to think of anything more likely to lift up the spirits of masses of depressed or "backward" folk. Carried out properly, such a step might even lead to a real burst of enthusiasm, a genuine release of energy among the working peasantry. Their rights in land would increase and so would their share of the land's product. They would forthwith want more food, clothing and non-luxury housing materials; in time they would want other commodities, some of the better things of life; and more education for their children. In the language of the economist, there should be a very sizeable increase in effective demand; hence an improved rural market for urban manufactures, and an associated improved urban market for rural raw or semi-processed materials. With bigger and better markets for city and country products there would be more rural and urban employment. If we let our minds soar, we can conceive of a beneficial *upward* spiral of development. We could then cease to fear the current bugaboo of increased production—limited demand—falling prices. In short, there would be a solid institutional foundation for economic development. The attractive vista would be opened up of raising the existing low per capital "social capital"; *i.e.* with more education and an improved grasp of the rudiments of science and engineering, the Indian rural and urban economy would be able to make better use of technological improvements and more complex forms of organization. As a long-term goal one could think of the displacement of cheap, half-hearted or incompetent labour, by a more rationally trained, better educated, and more competent labour force. Such a force is likely to be more efficient and more expensive; on both grounds employers would be driven to, and would benefit from the use of more labour-saving devices and the spurring of general technological development. The distant prospect is presented of India's engineering backwardness yielding to widespread modernization.

Let us now return to earth and explore further the practical side of carrying out the principle of land to the tiller-in-the-fields. Properly understood and executed, such a proposal could avoid bogging up in the ceilings issue and could escape the false dilemma of the land tenure reform *vs.* organization of production controversy. The essence of the proposal made here is quite simple: those who own land but don't work it would lose their (lucrative) paper rights; those who are already out in the fields working the land would gain the exclusive right to work that land, or, if they have weak rights, would

gain the improved exclusive right. Thus the control of land would pass directly from non-tilling owners or tenants to working tenants (whether recognized leaseholders or customary tenants without formal documents), to cropsharers, and to farm servants and other regularly employed labourers. In the process, the existing work unit of the actual cultivator-in-the-field would become the *de facto* unit of ownership. Thus the existing cultivation pattern and the new ownership pattern would completely overlap and become identical. At the first instance there would arise neither the highly complex problem of organizing co-operatives nor the very thorny issue of imposing ceilings and redistributing land. Instead we would be executing a much more clear-cut and understandable programme: "Leave the land alone; re-distribute the proprietors."

One could think of a variety of measures which might give effect to such a proposal. Legislation might provide that at the death of non-tilling owners their rights in land could pass only to those who already are actual tillers. Or, to achieve more immediate results, legislation might lay down that no further transfers of agricultural land may occur except to those who are now tillers and who propose to work the land with their own hands. Or legislation might take away forthwith the rights in the land of the non-tillers. In this case, token compensation might be provided for former proprietors possessing ample means; rehabilitation grants could be offered to assist former proprietors of limited resources to take up other occupations.

If India's recent agrarian history demonstrates anything, it is that doing and saying nothing is preferable to taking small steps slowly and timidly. In Indian conditions if you do not totally reject the principle of non-working cultivators, you cannot prevent the village oligarchs from acting as landlords. As soon as you leave the door barely open for property income to non-working proprietors—which you do when you permit land ownership to exist unassociated with labour in the fields—you allow all the evils of concentration of power at the village level to come trotting back in. As long as some peasants are without land or very short of land, they will be at the mercy of those who are allowed to have land without working it. The whole world of organized subterfuge, with which so many villages are already replete, will continue unabated.

In basic concept the programme of abolishing proprietary rights is clearly and easily understandable at the village level. It is tangible and testable in village terms. Every peasant in the village knows who does what kind of work, under what terms, in whose fields. Any outsider, even a "city slicker," can soon tell who works in a village and who watches: all that is required is a glance either at the clothes (*safaid posh* don't dirty themselves in the fields), or at the forehead or back of the neck (you don't get a cracked sun-dried skin sitting

on your shaded upstairs balcony); or by shaking hands (when a city person finds that *gaonwala's* hands are softer than his own, he can draw his own conclusion).

The proposal to take land away from those who don't work, and to leave it with those who do, is not new. Of all demands it is the one most frequently made in most parts of rural India by the working peasants themselves. It does not originate from outside, but from the very core of village realities. The heart of power, prestige, and standing in the village lies in land. Put land in the hands of those who are working it and you crack the existing concentration of power.

I do not intend to suggest that such a step will be a "cure-all" to India's agrarian problem. If it is put on the statute book efforts will be organized to deal with it as with all other land reforms laws, *i.e.* by evasion. It seems to me, however, that legislation of this type would prove the most difficult of all to evade. In one stroke it would establish the peasant's *legal* and *moral* right to the land he works; and it would encourage the working peasantry to join together to attain or protect the rights granted them by law. The Indian rural scene, as I read it, is ready to yield to any *sustained* pressure for change. All sections of rural society are either hopeful or fearful of change. Even the Tanjore mirasdars, I believe, are prepared to give in; their strong language of recent months mostly represents an effort to extract the best possible terms from Government in exchange for the surrender of their highly privileged position. The most sustained resistance to change may possibly come from elements like the U.P.'s new *pakka haveliwale*, the bare *kisans* lately grown into *maliks*; newly won privileges are those given up most reluctantly.

It may appear to be a weakness of such a programme that it calls for no direct assault forthwith on the problem of economic organisation in agriculture. Fundamentally, however, the peasant families want land and they want land of their own. Their hunger for it is like that for water of travellers long lost in the desert and nearing a small, inadequate oasis. They see the water; they know it is not enough; but such as it is they must have it. Nothing else will do. In this setting the *agrarian* transformation must come first. Only then can there be a proper footing for the long needed rationalization of agricultural production. Until proprietary rights are ended, co-operatives won't stand a chance of working out successfully. Either they will fail or they will be dominated by the *maliks* and their friends.

In the last analysis the crucial question about these proposals is their bearing upon property rights. Much obscure and time-dissipating debate could be avoided if the participants would deal frankly

with one central problem : where do they stand on property rights in land and the enjoyment of income based solely on such property rights. The fact is that all land reform from zamindari abolition downward amounts to an abridgement of property rights. The necessity for still further abridgement of such rights compelled the Central Government in 1955 to put through an amendment to the Constitution of India providing that the amount of compensation for property taken by Government could no longer be raised as a question in the Courts. The sanctity of property is also suffering from another attack: the cry for equality heard from all quarters today and the associated emphasis on the dignity of manual labour put in jeopardy the custom of permitting rentiers to derive an income solely from paper rights in land. It scarcely needs to be added that such rentiers have no place in a "socialistic pattern" of society, to which the Indian National Congress and the Government of India have formally committed themselves.

In the long run what holds out the best hope is any programme that will get the rural mass into motion, make them into a self-propelling force, generating their own energy. How often have we heard that in India everything is handed down from the top and that the process requires to be reversed. Whatever demerits our proposals may have, at least no one can say that they do not begin at the bottom.

A great deal of fundamental change is going on today among the working producers themselves—the labourers, tenants, and land owners. They are getting a better evaluation of themselves as people and of their economic contribution. They are casting a more realistic eye at the neighbours who have been riding on their backs. Land reforms have achieved less than was expected of them. Nonetheless, India's older agrarian order is on the way out.

VI

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENTAL MEASURES ON RURAL SOCIETY*

A. R. DESAI

The paper represents an attempt at a brief review, in a very broad outline, of the changes that have been taking place in the rural life of India under the impact of the various measures of the Indian Union Government.

The choice of the subject has been prompted by the following considerations:

INDIAN SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Indian society has been experiencing one of its greatest transitions in history since the advent of the British rule. Its technological foundation, its economic structure, its social institutional framework based on the caste-system and the joint family, its political organization, its ideological orientation and cultural value systems have been undergoing a qualitative transformation. As the British rulers generated changes in Indian society basically to serve their own interests, these changes were not uniform or symmetrical and, therefore, created specific types of contradictions and antagonisms within Indian society.

After the withdrawal of the British from India the Indian people have entered a new phase of existence; independence has released their initiative and creative energies. The Government as well as other agencies have been evolving and operating various schemes to bring about changes in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the people. The study of these changes is fascinating and instructive as it gives glimpses of the social change affecting one-fifth of mankind.

Among the various agencies attempting to alter the social life in India at present the state has acquired signal significance as a factor ushering change. It has been effecting social changes by creating, to use Talcott Parsons' phraseology, "situations in which people must act" as well as by operating on 'subjective' elements—their sentiments, goals, attitudes and definitions of situations.

*Reproduced from Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology, Vol. I-II, pp. 267-277.

STATE OF INDEPENDENT INDIA—ITS GOAL

The Constitution of the Indian Union has already formulated the goal towards which Indian society is to develop.

THE LEGACY OF BRITISH RULE

Before we survey the measures adopted by the government of the Indian Union to realize this goal, it is necessary to visualize concretely the type of rural social structure which it inherited from the British rulers and which became the basis on which it operated.

(a) The British rulers, as is now well-known, had dealt an almost fatal blow to the rural organization which existed for centuries on the foundation of an almost independent and autarchic village community, collectivist in spirit, based on the village possession of land and unity of agriculture and industry, producing for local needs and functioning through three main institutions, viz., the Joint Family, the Caste and the Village Panchayat, and paying tribute to the state or the intermediary collectively and in kind out of the actual produce.

(b) They introduced situations "which were external to the social system as a whole" and "independent of the internal institutional structure, or the immediate situations in which large masses of people acted," by almost destroying the collectivist through hierarchic foundations of the social order and by introducing the individualist, competitive *gestalt* within it. They introduced private property in land through *Zamindari* and *Ryotwari* land tenures. They substituted in place of payment of revenue in kind by the village community on the basis of a definite share from the produce, one in cash from the individual, with the inevitable result that the motif of the entire agrarian economy shifted from production for use to production for market, first to secure cash for the payment of revenue and secondly to adjust to the new setting introduced by the British. Thus the agrarian economy was enmeshed into the web of the Indian and world market. By ruining village artisan industries through pushing their own machine-made goods, they destroyed the self-sufficiency of village life. They undermined the authority of the caste and the village *panchayat* by bringing the village under the rule of laws made by the centralized state and depriving the old institutions of their penal powers.

(c) While Britain thus destroyed the old economic and social equilibrium by introducing capitalist economic forms in India, no new equilibrium emerged, since she thwarted free economic development in general, and industrial development in particular, which would have militated against imperialist economic interests. The Indian rural scene as a result of this underwent a transformation based on increased impoverishment of the mass of the rural population, an increasingly

deteriorating agrarian economy, sharp changes in rural class structure and fossilization of rural, social and cultural institutions.

(d) This resulted in the lop-sided and unbalanced position of agriculture in the national economy, mass ruination of artisans, over-pressure on land, increasing diminution in the size of the holdings, growth of sub-division and fragmentation of land leading to the alarming increase of uneconomic holdings, low yields, rise of massive indebtedness of the peasant population, extending grip of money-lenders, traders, landlords and substantial farmers over poor peasantry, steady passing of land from cultivators to creditors and resultant growth of absentee landlordism and rise in the number of landless labourers. In the *zamindari* areas, the letting and sub-letting of land resulted in the extensive growth of functionless non-cultivating rent-receivers creating a chain of intermediaries (tenants, sub-tenants and sub-sub-tenants) whose cumulative burden had to be borne by the actual tiller of the soil.

(e) In the social sphere, the operation of the laws which transformed land into a commodity capable of being bought, sold, mortgaged, leased and partitioned, in the economic context described above, engendered centrifugal tendencies in the joint family and led to its increasing disintegration. According to the Report of All India Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee, the average size of the rural family has dwindled to 5.01 persons. The consequences of the shrinking of family in terms of human relations, emotional and attitudinal imbalance deserve to be stressed.

(f) The caste system experienced a peculiar jolt under the impact of the British rule. Caste ranking and economic status have been closely co-related. "Caste rank is particularly manifest through ritual symbols; a group which was economically well off could acquire ritual hallmark to raise its relative position in the hierarchy."

The impact of the British rule and the developments that took place under it were different on different castes. Some of the upper castes of the old social order acquired control over land and became land owners. Some of these took to trading, moneylending and such other business. A number of the intermediate castes, as a result of the operation of the laws of market economy, acquired lands and developed into substantial farmers or rich tenants. Many other castes and sub-castes, having lost their occupational security and having no alternative means of employment, took to agriculture, becoming small farmers or agricultural labourers, or vegetated in their traditional occupations. The scheduled castes, depressed classes and aboriginal tribes were more and more transformed into agricultural labourers, agrestic serfs or bond-tillers.

Thus, in the rural area, as a result of the dynamic but increasingly deteriorating economy, a profound socio-economic transformation took place during the British rule. Certain castes acquired a monopoly of economic power and resources. Certain other castes belonging either to upper or intermediate categories struggled to wrest control from the successful caste groups. Other castes suffered a further decline in their economic status. The agrarian area became a vast cauldron of fiercely competing units where the old hierarchy of caste system based on birth, status and ritual hallmarks, was being transformed into a new hierarchy based on the increasing monopoly of wealth, power and culture. However, it should be noted that this competition predominantly operated within the matrix of the caste structure. Castes were competing with castes. There were shifts of power from some of the upper castes either to other upper castes or to some of the intermediate castes. The economically weak lower castes, though they became further weaker in this conflict, also initiated and developed struggles for the removal of their disabilities and the betterment of their conditions. It was unfortunate that this historical process of occupational changes of castes and their new correlations was not properly observed and its significance evaluated till very recently.

RURAL INDIA

A brief picture of conditions in the rural area will assist us to understand the nature of the legacy inherited from the British period by the government of the free Indian Union. . . .

Land concentration, predominance of uneconomic holdings, a third of the agricultural population reduced to the level of agricultural labourers, a large portion of the non-agricultural rural population also living in a precarious condition, dependent on the prosperity of agriculture, and, further, a substantial section of even the agricultural owners and agricultural tenants on medium or small-sized farms desperately struggling for survival on meagre agricultural production—such has been the picture of rural social life in India.

Provision of employment for millions of peasants who are unemployed but whose unemployment is disguised, as also for the ruined and unemployed non-agricultural section of the rural people; adequate wage for the agricultural labourers; proprietary rights and economic units of cultivation for the tenants; and economic holdings for the lower and middle strata of peasantry, along with proper credit facilities, marketing opportunities, suitable conditions for growing crops in a manner which would enable them to compete favourably with the prosperous and rich farmers—these are some of the fundamental requirements of a vast section of the rural people. In addition to these, they need to be provided with better seeds, fertilizers, adequate supply of water and better transport and marketing facilities. In short, the

fundamental task confronting the new government was to provide proper opportunities to all agricultural producers to compete on equal terms in the market.

As Chester Bowles very aptly sums up "Land inequality is a bottleneck clogging the creative energy of the people ; a bottleneck that must be broken " and further "Land reform is not a solution of course ; it is the first essential step to agricultural improvement, to consolidation of fragmented holdings and to the development of village co-operatives."

MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE INDIAN UNION

The government of the Indian Union has adopted a number of measures to reconstruct rural social life. They can broadly fall into the following categories :

(a) *Measures affecting Political Life, their Impact :*

The granting of universal franchise to the people by the state has been one of the most significant events. Millions of individuals, irrespective of caste, rank, sex or any other differentiation, have secured the right to vote. Thus the entire rural population has been brought into the political whirlpool. Of the two-hundred million voters, the overwhelming majority belong to the rural areas. The picture and some of the results of the first election are now available. Implications of such elections in generating various currents have now become more distinct. The very organization brought into being for conducting elections in 1951 had great impact on the rural people. Ninety-thousand polling stations were established ; 224,000 polling booths built. A systematic campaign was launched to explain the mechanics of voting to the people. Balloting was spread over one hundred days. Voting by party symbols printed on voting papers of different colours was evolved to suit the illiterate masses. Symbols having caste or religious significance were not permitted. About 1,800 candidates contested the 497 seats in the House of People, and over 15,000 candidates for the 3,283 seats in twenty-two assemblies. Numerous parties organized their propaganda campaigns. The four largest parties had secular politico-economic programmes. Numerous minor parties on provincial level sprang up. A total of 106 million people voted in the elections.

This single measure of the government generated powerful social and political ferment in rural India, the implications of which are too profound to be fully comprehended. It exposed the rural populations to the battery of ideas formulated in their programmes by various political parties and groups. It created a new type of social and cul-

tural climate and process. Political discussions, meetings, processions and demonstrations were unprecedented events, new phenomena in the life of the countryside. The election processes agitated extensively for the first time the almost inert life of the rural people and created a new mobility, physical, mental and emotional among them. It created conditions for the rise of numerous institutions of political, economic and cultural significance, some of them progressive, others reactionary (caste, communal, semi-feudal, social and economic and others). During the elections, economic issues came to the forefront and divergent class interests were revealed. Even propaganda carried on to work up caste sentiments had to resort to distinct economic appeals. Even voting on the basis of caste loyalties disclosed that specific castes usually aligned with specific political and economic parties. It is unfortunate that sociological and anthropological literature which is mounting up in India has not paid proper attention to this aspect of the contemporary rural life almost electrified by the elections and resultant mass political awakening of the rural people.

The effects of this development on different age groups, different sexes, different castes and provincial groups, as well as on different classes have to be assessed. It has created a situation, a climate, in which various ideologies and outlooks, passions and emotions, will ally, clash, modify one another or even result into various amalgams. In centuries of its existence, the rural community never lived such rich turbulent life, never experienced such unique events. The entry of the rural millions in the orbit of active politics as a result of the grant of universal suffrage and elections is a veritable new point of departure in the history of rural society pregnant with incalculable possibilities.

(b) *Measures affecting economic life :*

The government of the Indian Union has taken various measures to reconstruct the economy of India on the basis of what it describes as the principle of Mixed Economy. To reconstruct rural economy it has adopted measures which can be broadly classified into the following categories :

(a) *Measures to extend and improve the extant agriculture :*

- (i) Reclamation of certain lands for cultivation.
- (ii) Construction of major and minor Irrigation Projects, some of them of multi-purpose nature.
- (iii) Production of improved seeds, fertilizers, and tools as well as insecticides.

(b) *Measures to reform land relations :*

- (i) Vesting of the estates of the intermediaries (*Zamindars*, *Taluqdars* and others) barring certain properties such as home farm lands, homesteads and others in the state on the basis of payments of compensation to the intermediaries.
- (ii) Placing of limitations on future acquisitions of lands by different classes of people.
- (iii) Tenancy Reforms designed to reduce rents, give security against eviction, and give tenants an opportunity to acquire permanent rights over the land by payment of fixed compensation subject to landlord's right to resume cultivation of a certain area for his personal cultivation.
- (iv) Restrictions on sale and mortgage, letting and sub-letting of lands.

(c) *Measures to protect farmers from the oppression of Creditors :*

- (i) Numerous measures to regulate private money-lending.
- (ii) Measures to scale down debts, etc.

(d) *Measures to bring about an all round development of rural areas, resulting in the strengthening of the national economy as a whole :*

- (i) Establishment of Community Development Blocks and National Extension Services.

(e) *Measures creating new organizations to assist the process of the betterment of the life of the rural people :*

- (i) Establishment of co-operative societies, *Vikas Mandals*, *Gaon* or *Gram* (Village) *Panchayats* as well as *Nyaya Panchayats*.

(f) *Measures to assist some of the small-scale and cottage Industries in Rural India :*

We shall briefly indicate the effects of these measures on rural life of the people as well as their impact on different classes of rural society.

No measures have been evolved which would provide employment on a sufficient scale to solve even to a reasonable extent this major problem of the rural society, or which would give better conditions of living or land to the agricultural workers comprising about one-third of the agrarian population. As David G. Mandelbaum has rightly pointed out "The lowest castes, those who are mainly

landless labourers, often gain nothing at all from the irrigation projects and the redistribution of land. They have nothing to begin with, nothing which can be improved, no means of getting an economic start and so they remain economically as well as socially disadvantaged. The gap between them and other villagers frequently widens rather than diminishes on account of development projects."

As irrigation facilities, seed, fertilizers and improved tool, are not given gratis but are to be paid for, the advantages of these facilities are taken predominantly by those who have financial resources to purchase them. As the Community Project Evaluation Report points out the advantage is taken mainly by substantial farmers.

The measures to abolish intermediaries suffer from two basic defects. The compensation to be paid to the intermediaries runs to 550 crores. It is a huge burden on the community. These measures also permit large tracts of land to remain in the hands of *Zamindars* and others as personal property. Further, as the compensation to be paid by tenants is very heavy, only substantial tenants can purchase proprietary titles of the lands taken from the intermediaries.

With regard to tenancy legislation it may be observed that "About 50 per cent of tenants on small plots, where fleecing by landlords can be as serious as on large, were not covered" and further, "tenancy regulations are unworkable because the landlord is still left in a powerful position," and still further "Ever since tenancy legislation has been first talked about, the alert landowners had been carrying out widespread evictions in order to remove many of the occupancy claims."

Measures adopted to check the ravages of the moneylenders have hardly borne fruit. The report of the Rural Credit Survey very convincingly brings this out. These measures have been effectively circumvented and the moneylender is still supreme as he alone holds the key to finance necessary for meeting both the consumption and the production needs of the lower strata of the rural society.

Institutions established by the government like Co-operatives, Vikas Mandals, Gram Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats are also assisting in practice only the richer sections of the rural population and are further controlled by them. The Community Project Evaluation Report very significantly discloses this in the following words: "When one considers the pattern of membership in village organizations, be they co-operative societies, Vikas Mandals, Gram Panchayats or Nyaya Panchayats, one clearly finds that the membership is confined to the larger cultivators and that the smaller cultivators as well as agricultural labourers have practically no stake in the organization of the village."

With regard to the Community Development Projects and their impact on rural life, the Evaluation Report has brought to light the following facts:—

(a) The advantages of improvements are taken predominantly by substantial farmers. (b) The contributions to be made by the village people are felt as very burdensome by the lower sections of the people. (c) The organizations emerging in these areas for bringing about rural change are dominated by upper sections of the rural population, the poorer ones having "no stake in them." (d) The initial enthusiasm born of great hopes in the projects is slowly declining among the lower strata of the population.

GROWTH OF SOCIAL CLEAVAGE IN RURAL AREAS

To sum up, as a result of the government measures to reconstruct economic life of the rural people, great changes have taken place in the socio-economic structure of the rural society. Some of the old classes (feudal and semi-feudal) have been largely crippled; some (substantial farmers) have been strengthened. Middle and lower sections have not benefited. The process of economic disintegration of these sections is advancing. (i) The measures have resulted in transforming many *zamindari* type of landlords into a class of substantial farmers and capitalist agriculturists. (ii) By numerous tenancy and other laws referred to above, the government is helping to create a class of prosperous peasants out of substantial tenants or a section of the medium-sized cultivators.

This class of prosperous peasants only can take advantage of the numerous facilities, such as improved seeds, better fertilizers, irrigation, efficient tools, better roads and also improved marketing facilities, thereby improving their production and sale of the product.

On the other hand, the vast mass of unemployed persons, large sections of the owners of uneconomic holdings, the mass of poor peasants and agricultural labourers, either remain unaffected by these measures or are adversely affected.

A sharp conflict of interests and a resultant social cleavage are developing in the rural areas as a result of the measures of the government, Central and State. On one side there are prosperous peasants, landlords, village moneylenders and traders and the richer sections of the rural people. On the other, the middle and small cultivators, the mass of land labourers and ruined non-agrarian population.

As observed earlier, social castes and economic classes are closely correlated. As a result of this, the conflicts of these classes even take the form of conflicts of castes. Thus rural areas are seething

with new caste tensions, sometimes visible in elections, sometimes in economic struggles, sometimes in the struggles in local organizations.

These new patterns of tensions are slowly emerging in the open. The tensions are becoming more widespread and are moving unfortunately in the direction of sharper conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The rural life of India is undergoing transformation under the impact of Government Measures. The types of changes that are taking place have been narrated in their broadest outline. What will be the direction and tempo of these changes? Will the democratic political objective fit in with the newly-emerging class and social antagonisms in Rural India? Will rural social life experience another round of tensions and antagonisms? Can these contradictions be resolved without changing the very motif and mode of production? What institutional transformation will be required to establish both economic prosperity and social harmony in the rural life? These are some of the fundamental questions posed before all social scientists.

The rural change that is generated by the Government measures is tending to sharpen the contradictions among various classes in the rural society and in the context of caste and other institutional background is slowly unleashing tensions, antagonisms and collisions, the implications of which have to be properly comprehended if the direction of the development of one-fifth of mankind is to be assessed and influenced.

VII

CHANGES IN AGRARIAN ORGANIZATION*

LUCIO MENDIETA Y. NUNEZ

Dr. S. C. Dube, in a clear, interesting and systematically developed study, under the title of "Social Structure and Change in Indian Peasant Communities," presents a general panorama of the Indian population in this century.

The population of an Indian village is united by three different bonds of solidarity (a) family ties, (b) the caste system, and (c) territorial affinities.

The caste system is the most important and overrules family and territorial ties; in order to understand the extent and depth of its influence, it is only necessary to know that internal relationships within the castes are subject to rules governing matrimony, meals, physical contact and occupations and that these rules are obeyed because they are considered to be of divine origin.

Castes have remained as exclusive groups throughout the ages, since strict endogamy is observed.

The influence of the castes in social relationships is, accordingly, very great in India, although sometimes of a negative character. "The taboos of the Indian caste system," asserts Max Weber, "inhibit social intercourse much more than the Funy-Schi system of Chinese belief in spirits hindered trade." Nevertheless, according to this same author, "the railways will gradually render caste taboos illusory."

The interesting paper by Dr. S. C. Dube on present-day India confirms the study made by the great German sociologist at the end of the last century. In effect, according to S. C. Dube, the social structure of India is subject to considerable changes under the impact of Western culture and civilization. Modern systems of transport and communications, modern technology, industrialization and Western-

*Reproduced from Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology, Vol. I—II, pp. 225-230.

type education during the last 10 years have combined to produce the following obvious changes :

(1) The social position of the individual in India is dependent upon his caste ; but at present that system of class distinction is being superseded by another rival system by which the individual's position in society is determined on his own personal merit.

(2) This change in class distinction is more apparent when a person moves from country to town since, on establishing himself in the city, he has to accustom himself to urban customs.

(3) There is a noticeable weakening in the authority of the individual castes in rural India.

(4) A certain individualism has developed within the family.

(5) Western forms of life and modern technology have been accepted by the upper strata of society as they have the opportunity of acquiring them.

(6) On the other hand the lower strata are, in a way, conservative because of their lack of education and poverty.

(7) Notwithstanding the relative conservatism of the lower classes, it appears that the social structure of the village is in a state of dissolution and disintegration.

The work of Dr. Tarlok Singh of the New Delhi Planning Commission complements the information given by Dr. Dube.

Dr. Tarlok Singh discusses the "Landless Labourer and the Pattern of Social and Economic Change" and explains in detail in this valuable work the effect upon India of what is known as "the impact of the West." This impact is particularly noticeable in the villages and has developed slowly and indirectly.

(a) The products of Western industry introduced into the villages of India by pedlars diminished the demand for home-produced goods. Many craftsmen who used to make such local products became redundant and turned into farm workers without land of their own.

(b) Western ideas on ownership and finance changed the self-sufficient spirit in the village for an acquisitive, profit-seeking spirit, with the exploitation of the weak by the strong under the guise of legality. Wealth and self-seeking replaced the community spirit in the scale of values.

(c) These conditions created an internal capitalism represented by foreigners and by Indian traders and landowners who promoted the feudal conditions by means of latifundism and monetary loans.

(d) New techniques diminished the opportunities for work in a growing population, thus accentuating the effects of Western economic influence and Indian capitalism

(e) As a result of all this, in the last 60 years, the population dependent upon agriculture has increased. It is calculated that it increased from 193 to 250 million between 1931 and 1951.

(f) Under Western influence, the bonds created by the social castes are tending to decrease, and in some castes have disappeared altogether; but this has created the problem of providing work for men who were formerly employed within the strict caste system.

The increase in the number of agricultural workers in India without land of their own is a problem which requires early solution. For this reason a democratic planning scheme is being put into practice and is founded on various definite points which tend to explain what should be done. Dr. Tarlok Singh is working on this. But can a Sociological Congress embark upon the study of these questions which properly belong to politics? We think not; the role of sociology should be defined as the study of prevailing social conditions for the purpose of obtaining scientific theories capable of serving as a basis for action; but sociology cannot indicate the precise terms for this action since they are dependent upon political conditions and the economic and social potentialities of each individual country.

Dr. A. R. Desai, of the Department of Sociology of the University of Bombay, with his work on "The Impact of the Measures Adopted by the Government of the Indian Union on the Life of the Rural People," confirms the concepts we have just put before you. He describes firstly the changes which took place in Indian society under the influence of Western culture and civilization during the period of British rule and the effects—mostly negative—of the measures adopted by the present Government of the Indian Union to reconstruct the country on new social and economic bases. The study of the effects of these measures certainly comes within the scope of sociology since they form part of the social structure of India and the failure of many of them shows how daring and dangerous it is to prescribe them.

The study now being made by Dr. Desai of the results of the contact between Western culture and civilisation and Indian culture, under British rule, to a large extent confirms and also complements the information given by Doctors S. C. Dube and Tarlok Singh :

(a) Western culture dealt a mortal blow to the rural organization of India, based on an autarchical village community, with common ownership of land.

(b) It destroyed the collectivistic spirit and introduced individualism and competition.

(c) It introduced private ownership, letting out of land and individual cash taxation.

(d) In this way, agrarian economy based on the satisfaction of the needs of the family changed to an economy based on satisfaction of the demands of the market.

(e) It destroyed the self-sufficiency of rural life, at the same time ruining the small village industries by the introduction of machine-made products.

(f) The mass of craftsmen—deprived of their crafts by the articles imported from modern British factories—turned to agriculture, thus increasing the volume of labourers without land and accentuating the pressure of the rural population on the land. The size of small holdings diminished, and uneconomic properties increased in number.

(g) It increased the power of moneylenders, tradesmen and landowners over the poverty-stricken farmers.

(h) It increased the number of tenants and intermediaries (farmer-tenants, sub-tenants, sub-sub-tenants, etc.) supported by those who actually cultivated the ground.

(i) It decreased the power of the caste and reduced the size of the family.

(j) All this produced considerable impoverishment of the masses and internal lack of balance in the rural structure of India. To remedy this situation the Government of the Indian Union has put various measures into practice ; (a) measures of a political nature establishing universal suffrage which gave rise "to considerable social and political quickening in rural India"; (b) measures of an economic nature such as irrigation projects, the introduction of better seed and fertilizers, reforms in letting arrangements to protect the tenant and cut out intermediaries, protection of the peasants against abuse by creditors, economic development of rural zones and the creation of co-operative societies and assistance to the small rural industries.

But these and other measures have failed because they only benefit those farmers who are in a sound economic position. No measures have been taken to allocate land to rural workers who have none, or to provide them with employment. The protective measures are easily circumvented ; the co-operative societies only favour the clever farmers.

The plans for rural economic development do not favour those who have nothing and, on the other hand, the subscriptions required to put them into operation overburden them.

To sum up, according to Dr. Desai, the governmental measures adopted in India have produced changes in the rural community which tend to intensify the opposition between classes in the rural communities and also between castes, thus causing tension, antagonism and clashes.

What sociological conclusions can be obtained from the three studies we have mentioned? What can the sociologist advise in regard to the changes which are taking place in the rural community of India?

The experience of the Indian people, like that of other peoples as history shows, supports the following generalization: whenever peoples of different culture and civilization come into contact, the most advanced tends to dominate and exploit the least developed. When these latter gain their independence, their upper classes who succeed in assimilating the civilization of their rulers, replace them in ruling and exploiting the masses.

The failure of the measures adopted by the Government of India to help the rural working class in the face of the changes in agrarian economic structure brought about by British rule and Western culture and civilization, in the same way as similar failures suffered by other peoples, serve as a basis for this further generalization: the upper classes of a country, who hold the economic power, tend to circumvent all the protective measures devised by the Government to help the working classes or to turn these same measures to their own profit.

From a strictly scientific point of view this is what, in our opinion, the Third World Sociological Congress can prove by way of general conclusions on the interesting studies submitted by Doctors Dube, Singh and Desai with regard to the changes in agrarian economic structure in India.

Although it is certain that sociology must study prevailing conditions, it does not follow from this, affirms the talented French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, "that we should give up trying to improve them: we would feel that our speculations were not worth the trouble if they had no more than a speculative interest." "Science," he adds, "can help us to find the road we should follow and to determine the goal towards which we blindly struggle."

· With the support of the abovementioned theories the sociologist can recommend, also in a general way, that in all those countries where peoples of different civilizations come into contact with each other, the Governments should not adopt empirical action in favour of the economically and politically weaker rural classes, but action planned on the basis of investigations and research carried out by scientists experienced in the social sciences so that the political action guides the changes in agrarian economic structure efficiently, preventing abuses, social inequalities and injustices.

VIII

NEED FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH*

M. N. SRINIVAS

A vast body of written literature, sacred as well as secular, is available to the student of Indian social institutions, and the existence of this literature has exercised a decisive influence on the analysis of Indian sociological problems. For instance, references to caste and kin relations in literature have been treated as historical data, and conditions obtaining today have been compared and contrasted with conditions alleged to prevail in historical times. The law books (*Dharma Sutras* and *Dharma Shastras*) have been assumed to refer to laws which were actually in force among the people and it has not been asked whether the laws did not refer to merely what a particular lawyer considered desirable or good. Even for the major lawyers it is not known when exactly they lived, it being not uncommon for one scholar's estimate to differ from another by as much as three centuries. This is especially so in the case of the earlier lawyers. Dr. I. P. Desai writes, "A further difficulty in the development of Hindu law is the lack of agreement among scholars regarding the dates of various works. There is no agreement regarding the time sequence (of the various authors). Buhler considers Gautama as the earliest Dharmasastrakar and Apastamba as the latest, while Jayaswal reverses the order, considering Apastamba as the earliest and Gautama as the latest Dharmasastrakar." (*Punishment and Penance in Manusmriti*, Journal of the University of Bombay, XV, part I, July 1946, p. 42). The provenance of a lawyer, and the sanction behind the rules enunciated by him are frequently far from clear if not unknown.

It is pertinent to mention in this connection that there is, among our educated people, an unstated but non-the-less real and deep-seated assumption that what is written is true, and the older a manuscript, the more true its contents. Learning is almost synonymous with poring over palm leaf mss. This bias in favour of literary material is most clearly seen in the syllabuses of Indological studies in our universities. Indology has come to be regarded as knowledge about India's past. Any suggestion that Indology should include the study of tribes and villages which are in existence today would be regarded as too absurd to merit consideration. Caste in the Vedas and in Manu ought to be studied but caste as a powerful force in modern Indian

*Reproduced from the article "Village Studies and their Significance," from 'Rural Profiles.' Edited by D. N. Majumdar, pp. 95-100.

life ought not to be. Such a separation between the past and present is not healthy.

The observation of social behaviour is everywhere a difficult undertaking and, in certain respects, observing one's own society is far more difficult than observing an alien society. In the case of Indians, there is the additional difficulty that ideas which are carried over from literary material, and from the caste to which one belongs by birth, vitiate the observation of field-behaviour. An example of such a failure to understanding the factual situation is provided by the way in which the idea of *varna* has vitiated the understanding of caste. I have discussed this point elsewhere, but I will briefly summarise it here. According to the *varna* scheme, there are only four castes and a few other groups, while as a matter of actual fact there are, in each linguistic area, several hundred castes, each of which is a homogeneous group, with a common culture, with a common occupation or occupations, practising endogamy and commensality. The castes of a local area form a hierarchy. There are several features of this hierarchy which run counter to the hierarchy as it is conceptualised in the idea *varna*. Firstly, in the *varna* scheme, there are only four all-India castes each of which occupies a definite and immutable place, while, in caste at the existential level, the only definite thing is that all the local castes form a hierarchy. Everything else is far from certain. For one thing, the hierarchy is characterised by uncertainty, especially in the middle region which spans an enormous structural gulf. Each caste tries to argue that it occupies a higher place than the one allotted to it by its neighbours. This arguability has an important function because it makes possible mobility, and castes are mobile over a period of time. There is occasional leap-frogging inside the system, a caste jumping over its neighbours to achieve a high position. Another important point is that the hierarchy is local, varying from one small local area to another, if not from one village to another. Two groups bearing the same name and living in the same linguistic region often occupy different positions in their respective local hierarchies and differ from each other in some customs and rites. The Kolis of Gujarat are a case in point.

It is clear that the idea of *varna* is far too rigid and simple to cover the immensely complex facts of caste. But the idea of *varna* helps to make the facts of caste in one region intelligible all over India by providing a conceptual frame that is simple, clear-cut, stable, and which, it is imagined, holds good everywhere. And it helps mobility too, for ambitious castes find it less difficult to take on high-sounding Sanskritic names with the name of one of the *varnas* as a suffix, than to take on the name of a local higher caste. But all this is lost sight of because *varna* is treated as describing caste accurately and fully. But this would not have happened if we Indians had not taken it for granted that the idea of *varna*, derived from literary, material, ade-

quately explained the facts of the caste system. The only cure for this literary bias lies in doing field-research. The field-worker, confronted by the bewildering variety and complexity of facts as they actually are is forced to relate what he sees to what he has assumed it to be, and the lack of correspondence between the two, results in his attempting to reassess the written material.

In every part of India only a few castes at the top enjoyed a literary tradition while the bulk of the people did not. Under British rule the top castes supplied the intelligentsia which acted as the link between the new masters and the bulk of the people. And the new intelligentsia saw the social reality through the written literature, regarding the deviations from the latter as aberrations. This group also perpetrated an upper-caste view of the Hindu social system on the new masters and through them, the outside world. Conditions prevalent among the upper castes were generalized to include all Hindus. For instance, women are treated much more severely among the higher castes than among the lower, but this distinction was ignored by the early reformers. They talked about the plight of the Hindu widow, the absence of divorce, the harshness of the sex code towards her and so on, but on all these matters the institutions of the lower differ in important respects from those of the higher castes. The point I am trying to make is that the observation of Hindu social life has been, and still is, vitiated by the book-view and the upper-caste-view. A sociological study of Indian sociologists would yield interesting results.

An emphasis on religious behaviour as such, as distinguished from what is written in the religious books and the opinions of the upper castes, would have provided us with a view of Hinduism substantially different from that of the philosophers, Sanskritists and reformers. I shall try to explain what I mean by an example. In the summer of 1948, I went along with the elders of Rampura village to the temple of the deity Basava to watch them consult the deity about rain. The priest performed *pūja*, chanting *mantras* in Sanskrit, and then the elders began to ask the deity to let them know whether it was going to rain or not in the next few days. I was expecting them to behave as I have seen devotees behave in the temples of the upper castes, *viz.*, stand with bowed head and folded palms, shut eyes, and utter words showing great respect for, and fear of, and dependence upon, the deity. I was completely taken aback to find them using words which they used to an equal, and a somewhat unreasonable equal at that. They became angry, shouted at the deity, taunted him, and went so far as to say that they considered even the government more worthy of confidence than him. And they were deadly serious all the time. Nothing could have been further from an urban Hindu's ideas of what the proper relationship was between man and god.

It is frequently said by apologists and reformers that Hinduism is not a proselytizing religion like Christianity and Islam. This again is not strictly true. Besides the Buddhists and Jains, the Lingayats, who began as a militant reformist sect in the South in the twelfth century, A.D., secured converts from all the castes from the Brahmin to the Untouchable in the early days of their history. The Lingayats are a well-organized sect, and they have monasteries scattered all over the Karnatak. In southern Mysore, for instance, the monasteries have a following not only among Lingayats but among a number of middle-range non-Brahminical castes with whom they are in continuous contact, and over whose life they exercise some kind of direction. The head of each monastery collects a levy from each of his followers through a hierarchy of agents. It is important to note that this is not confined to the Lingayats though they are the best-organized of the sects. The Brahmin followers of the great theologian and reformer, Sri Ramanujacharya, have a monastery at Melkote, about 26 miles from Mysore City, and the monastery has a following among the people in the surrounding towns and villages. Thus, both Brahmin and non-Brahmin sects have deeply influenced the people at large through organizations which have existed for hundreds of years. Still one frequently reads in books on Hindu religion and philosophy that Hinduism is unique in that it is not a proselytising religion. It is true that Hindus do not try to convert Christians or Muslims, but in a sense conversion is going on all the time within Hinduism. The lower castes and tribal people have been undergoing Sanskritization all the time, and sects, Brahminical and non-Brahminical, and Vaishnavite and Shaivite, have actively sought converts. Persecution for religious views and practices has not been unknown.

The studies of village communities which are currently being carried out in the different parts of the country provide the future historian with a vast body of facts about rural social life, facts collected not by travellers in a hurry, but by men who are trained to observe keenly and accurately. These studies constitute therefore valuable contributions to the social, political, economic and religious history of our country. Their value is further enhanced when it is realized that the changes which are being ushered in Independent and Plan-conscious India herald a complete revolution in our social life. It is true that in historic times India has been subject to invasions by diverse peoples including the Mughals and British, and that British rule inaugurated changes the fulfilment of which we are observing now, but the break with the past was never as complete and thorough-going as it is today. We have, at the most, another ten years in which to record facts about a type of society which is changing fundamentally and with great rapidity.

Historians have stated that a knowledge of the past is helpful in the understanding of the present if not in forecasting the future. It

is not, however, realised that a thorough understanding of the present frequently sheds light on the past. To put it in other words the intimate knowledge which results from the intensive field-survey of extant social institutions does enable us to interpret better data about past social institutions. Historical data are neither as accurate nor as rich and detailed as the data collected by field-anthropologists, and the study of certain existing processes increases our understanding of similar processes in the past. It is necessary to add here that great caution has to be exercised in such a task, for otherwise history will be twisted out of all recognition. But once the need for extreme caution is recognised, there is no doubt that our knowledge of the working of historical processes will be enhanced by this method. The universities are the proper organisations to conduct this research, and the government can help by giving money to the establishment of teaching and research posts in social anthropology and sociology. Too much stress on utilitarian research will defeat itself, and will further lower intellectual standards.

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